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"....HE RETCHES ONE HAND BEHIND HIM TO
BREAK HIM A HAZEL SWITCH AND WHOPS HIM-
SELF IN THE SHANKS AND HOLLERS OUT "CO-OOP
GODSEY."

TALL TALES OF THE KENTUCKY MOUNTAINS

BY
PERCY MACKAYE



DECORATIONS BY
E. MAC KINSTRY

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BY PERCY MACKAYE



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TALL TALES OF THE KENTUCKY MOUNTAINS
—B—
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO
Jean of Honey-holler

[J. B. M.]

From
"UNCLE SOLOMON"

LEETLE friend, Jean—
The scribe what has writ this down
has up and told me all about ye; and
you livin', he says, in right smart of a bee holler,
nigh on a purty water-spring, along of your con-
fideential partners, *Jim*, the hand-raised crow-
bird, *Bessy*, the piert mammy-goat, and *Rho-*
deeshy, the settin' hen—all snug as bugs in a
rug to your Paw-an'-Maw's cabin.

NOW, that sot me ponderin' on my own
home folkses in the mount'ins—*Suke*, my ole
woman, and our mulch-cow, *Matty Shell*, with
the purty twin horns, and *Chinkapin*, my ole
sow, dad bless her!—how-all this scribe feller
has ben gospellin' about them and me. (All
shore-to-goodness gospel, too, hit is!)

[v]

SO, thinks I: "Solomon, one o' these days o' time, when yan leetle Jeanie gits biggerin' to a half-grown'der, as kin foot hit smart on the hill trails, I'll jest drap round to her bee holler, and tote her back home—away-y to the high ridges. And thar us 'll set together under a green-shadder gum tree, list'nin' fur-off to a dreamsy toodalong-bird.

AND then, mebbe so, I 's tell her all abouts what the fox-puppies done in the butter-churn, that same mornin' I felled the picktooth on Pine Mount'in; and whar to meeschief Who-all's black hat got hided so slick; and how come hit Greasy Crick is callt *Greasy*; and a hull chuck-mouthful o' heestory what this-yere on-heedless scribe clean fergitted to chalk down in his book."

SO, then, Jeanie!—In yander time, will ye tote along pretty with ole Sol?

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Foreword: A MOUNTAIN MUNCH-
HAUSEN





FOREWORD

A Mountain Munchhausen



N the mountain heart of our New World, the Old still survives. Beyond the blue crests of the Kentucky Ridges broods a fabulous Land of Long Ago. There, far from the railroads, the roar of strident modernity comes only as a murmured rumor, if at

all. For there the creek-beds are alive with an ancient leisure, voluble with antic tongues in the smoky log-cabins, where Æsop and Chaucer and Munchhausen still sit anonymous by the fireside and spin their timeless lore.

Wild chronicles, witch legends, "tall" tales

of the great Appalachian timber, mingle there with ancestral memories of dim Irish hills, Scotch heaths and English moorlands—folk-memories transformed and fused in the thought and speech of American mountaineers.

Of this spoken tradition the writer and his trail-fellow heard many a mouthful, during a lucky sojourn in the mountains, spent in close friendly touch with the native people. More than a Foreword would be needed to describe that eager folk-loring adventure, its journeys on foot and mule-back by legend-haunted trails, the wild serenity of nature's unspoiled backgrounds, the gracious, ancient charm of log-cabin hospitality, in which we were privileged to share through the ample companionship of a well-beloved fiddler of those hills.

In remembrance, that sojourn remains an idyll as of another world: a world of the human spirit, whose simple realities—looked back upon from our contrasted life—turn to strange fantasies. For there in the mountains is a Nowadays contemporaneous with Noah, a zodiac obedient to Ptolemy, a modernity in which the machine of industrial civilization is unknown.

Yet, of course, that machine is inevitably swift to invade and to overcome, and in a few brief years that mountain world will be only a mirage gleaming from the mists of human record.

So it would seem well that such record should include in its scope not merely the literal data of an ethnic survey, but even more should seek to conserve in imagination the creative spirit of the mountains, which itself is peculiarly of imagination all compact.

From such incentive and desire, these tales—sprung from that living crop of folk lore which lies, like the mountain “mast,” * ages deep, under the tall Kentucky timber—have here burgeoned in print from sundry spoken sources, now from a mountain chronicle half told, again from a hint or anecdote avouched with huge gusto of solemnity, as these have sown themselves in the listening imagination of the writer.

This mast of mountain fiction is as varied as

* The old word *mast* is still universally used, in the mountains, for the crops of beechnuts, acorns and other nut-harvests of deciduous trees.

the regional acorns and chinkapins. From numerous creeks we gathered the kernels of many kinds in our pokes. Here, sprouted in this volume, is a handful of one particular species of tales, of a "tall," or whopping, variety.

Through some hill regions of our travel, tales of this large-dimensional sort were in their origin commonly ascribed, by hearsay, to one ancient fabulist of the mountains, named Solomon Shell.

Whatever the authenticity of these ascriptions, Sol's own fable-versions already had taken on a diversity of mutations in the retellings of his far-scattered neighbors, who—in rendering their respectful homage to a name grown legendary—were equally assiduous in grafting the live bark of legend with new shoots.

The writer, therefore, has merely followed that mountain precedent of neighborly respect, in ascribing to "ole Sol" the tales he has here related,—being himself an "up-country neighbor" from a north hill-creek of New Hampshire; and, by the same respectful precedent, he

has been as assiduous in fetching fresh hanks of yarn to the old cabin-loom.

In like spirit, he devoutly hopes that the green, ancient timber of Folk-truth, which has outwintered so many thousand blasts on the "slickery" peaks of Whopperdom, may lose no ell of its native "tallness" in being here felled for the type-setter, nor topple to a fate like that of the *Hick'ry Picktooth*, in the frozen valley of "Veracity."

Of Solomon Shell it was said, in native parlance:

"He war the tale-tellin'dest deevil-charmer, topground or under, ole Sol!"

We learned that old Sol himself had died at the age of ninety-eight years. He had been dead for more than twenty years, but the rumor of him still rose from the creeks like the rumbling of their full tides at spring equinox, and the glamour of his ancient presence still lit the cabin doors like the afterglow of autumn sunset.

So for almost the whole of the nineteenth century he had haunted these hills, a living

legend, rolling unconsciously under his tongue, as he spat in the wood fire, the cud of an ancient wit and lore which kinned him with the old saga-tellers of the Norse fjords and with charcoal-burning fairy-chroniclers of the German forests.

For he was veritably a Munchhausen of the mountains, wandering the Kentucky ridges, handing on unrecorded versions of the *Märchen** of his forebears, tinged by an indigenous raciness of the American pioneer.

Of his personal appearance, an old neighbor said of him:

"He war a meat-ax of a man, Sol Shell. Stood about five-foot-nine. Weared his haar long down over the neck, kindly of a peaked coon-cap on his haid. His beard were wild as a stubble-patch."

We heard of him in many far-sundered places, from people unknown to one another, united only in the common remembrance of a companionship which had charmed, teased,

* Of "The Peach-Rocked Deer," for example, I heard in the mountains several versions (related by persons who could not read and knew nothing of books), all differing, in numerous details, from the European version recounted by Baron Munchhausen.



A LIVING LEGEND

confounded, or hilariously enchanted them all. Old God-fearing women, still petulant with dim credulity of his preternatural whoppers, pursed their mouths at his name.

“Lor’!” said one of them, “sech contraptious lie-foolin’s! When that old gasher Sol drapped in of a winter evenin’, us common-sensers riz up from the fire-log and went in the next house,* and jist nacherly left him to the chilluns.”

“All the same,” retorted her husband, “jist nacherly we’d come toe-teeterin’ back ag’in for to listen at him—behint the loom.”

Throughout his own realm of the hill country, Solomon reigned in mountainy English with all the glory of his Bible namesake. His temple was the high timber, and the primal dwellers thereof—man kin and beast kin, human and demi-human—were storied themes for his apocryphal Song of Songs, wherein perhaps his most unctuous *leit-motif* was the mountain hog.

* That is, the next *room*.

In the mountains, the agile, acorn-fed generations of swine hold an epic rank in prowess and romance unknown to their sty-bred, slothful kindred of the lowlands. Mountain hogs are not merely stuff for the gorge of Mammon; they are also such gorgeous stuff as dreams are made on—arrayed, beyond pork-flesh, in the glamour of poetry. They are the highland freeholders. Alive on the wild trails, in both society and solitude, they are untrammelled companions of an untrammelled folk, free denizens of the mountain democracy. Even in death they are not Norman *pork*, but Saxon *pig*. Especially the sow which, with her litter of shoats, hugs closer to human palings, is an unfailing source of folk lore. Old Sol never tired of making her the heroine of his hogtales.

Thus in the charmed circle of the hearthstone Solomon Shell appears to have been a fable-tongued godfather to tribes of mountain children.

Stealing down out of the wintry hills, tapping at twilit cabin doors to pop in his coon-cap, he would herd his "godchilders" about his knees

in the flickering dark, his big-featured, solemn face now pondering his artful silences, now cracking into thundrous guffaws at his own whopper-wit.

So the writer has imagined him, speaking in his own vernacular of the mountains. . . .



TALL TALES

One: THE PEACH-ROCKED DEER



THE PEACH-ROCKED DEER

DOD-FOTCH ye, leetle feller! On-curl your toes from the poke-stick and divil thot-thar fire-log for to spit her tongue at ye. That's right smart. Now listen me, all you settin'-rounders, and I'll tell ye about "The Peach-Rocked Deer."

Well, chilluns, I shore were borned lucky—at the last! But first-offly, that war the most onluckyless, nothin'-doin'dest huntin' day o' my life. Seemed like my ole rifle-gun she was spellt—missed ary game-critter I aimed her at, every pop.

Trompin' the timber I'd ben, belly-empty, sence afore day-rise, and hit now hog-dark, and nary a buckshot left to my barrel. Hadn't et nothin' all day, I hadn't, but one party-striped peach, and now I were gnawin' the rock of hit, like a tree-rat aimin' fer to crack out

the nut-karnel. Couldn't slivver the goll thing nohow!

Well, thar I were crossin' the foot-bridge below Old Log, jist whar Shell Branch and Ruthie Young's jines to one creek and makes Greasy.

Did I told ye how hit git to be called Greasy? I's tell ye that, next-off. And quar old Ruthie, the he-woman, how she done the murder thar? Shore, I'll tell ye that, too.—Keep your traps set. Hit takes two fleas to hatch a tickful.

Where-at were I? Crossin' over the foot-log, high over Greasy.

A frog-toad were chunkin'. The mist fog stank spearminty. The moon she were warpin' spider-webs on the tide under me. I seed my shadder-legs crisscrossin' thar. I were suckin' of that peach-rock, tooth-wedgin' hit to crack. Suddent I nigh swallowed hit whole.

Whee-ay-y-y—oo-oo-ee—yud!yud!yud!
Dad-fetch me! chilluns, ef yan weren't the blood-churndin'dest whinny-holler ever I heerd in my soul!

I shore sweated whey-water. I stood as still as the Seventh Day and harked of hit. Yander

shrill-deep echo shackled the timber of Pine Mount'in like hit were David's dulcimore shudderin' fer Saul.

"Golly bust me!" thinks I, "ef that hain't a buck deer rut-sparkin' his mate, hit's shore a riz-from-death Cherokee."

So I waits still ag'in till I kin hear my heart knock. Then I grabbles my gun, pokes through the ivy bushes, and rounds the trail up towards the Injun clift west to Old Log. Hit's in thar is the room in the clift whar the Injins ustid to chip their stone-flints. Hunderds o' bushels is a-layin' thar yit, under the drip shelft.

Saft as corn-silk I slips up in the dark stillishness. Leetle night critters was cricketin' under the chistnut bloom. So I retches up my eyes to the roof o' the clift, the handle o' the Star-Dipper jist aidgin' hit shiny beyand. The dreen of a water-spring fell slitterin' down thar, raisin' up a drifty fog-smoke, which they was a bright, pided moon-rainbow springin' and spanglin' thar, high overly.

And ri'chunder yan rainbowy bridge thar were standin' a red, horned critter the God-wonderfulest in the world. Three legs he were

standin' on, trembly like popples, and the fourth hit were crookled like a scythe-blade, clippin' and tearin' the clift with his hoof-p'int.

Stretchin' up his broad-long, slim-long neck he was, like he would dreem the Star-Dipper with his nuzzle, and the nose-holes of hit blaze-snortin' with fog-clouds. His both eyes was rollin' like sun-balls. Sech a sight of towerin' antlers hain't sprangled on a buck sence the Ark.

Yea, my rounders! I axes ye ef that war a minute for a man without nary a buckshot!

I slid clos'ter, chawin' of that peach-rock. The critter snuffed me.

My brain thunk chain-lightnin'. I grounded my rifle-gun and up-ended hit.

He spied my shadder in the moon. He fasted his sun-bally eyes on me.

I spit that peach-rock in the barrel and rammed hit home. I cocked and aimed her.

The buck scringed back on his hinder legs.

I banged away with the peach-rock! Blood busted a thunderin' spout betwixt his horns. The critter sprang'd plumb clare o' the world

over my haid in the chistnut bloom, and me starin' uply.

But jist only yan drizzle o' blood throwed a drift in my eyes, drappin' down from the red moon-rainbow thar.

Yea, chilluns, dad-burn him! nare sight nor sign of that deer-buck did I done find in the timber, trackin' and cussin' the trail o' dawn to my holler breakfast pot! Dad-fetch hit! I wisht I'd had that peach-rock back ag'in, for to crack hits nut.

Well, childers, hit were a world o' water slid down Greasy 'fore I sampled nothern. Ary onc't a while, though, seemed like I had a witch-spell ponderin' about hit.

One day dawn, come A-prile, I were asleep in a cave 'way-y on the mount'in. Thar I's woke, and my brain purely drinched with fragrance, my ears hummin' a dronesy music. I sat plumb up in the dimmishness, and right in the open gap o' the cave I seed thar a drift of peach bloom shinin' wonderly. Blue-pink hit were, and skeins of honey-bees loomin' hit like a quilt pattern.

I riz and run to the sill, but thar weren't only

nuthin' but the day-rise pinkin' up the east, and a leetle peach-bloom cloud driftin' fur off down the timber.

Tides o' time arter then, hit were, and I were grubbin' yarbs, miles away yander on Bab's Branch: sech a same fruit-bearin' verge o' the year as I shot that buck; hot noon, and I were feelin' sweat-thirsty and belly-cave-in.

Then I hears a toodalong bird hollerin' deep in the woods,—“*Stri-pey!—Stri-pey!*”—and thinks I, “Thar’s a water-spring.”

So off I canters in the heavy timber where hit were the coolest, deep-shadderest dark, kindly a shet-eyed place, so dreamsome hit war and silentful. Comes siftin' down jist one slanty beam o' the sun, and hit burnin' red-gold on the nape of a big moss-kivered log, one end laid agin hits old chop-stump.

And outen that dark, rottid stump they was growin' the most beautifulest, spranglin' tree, and hit laden with ripe fruitses.

The likes of a pillar o' fire hit sprangled thar, and hits fruitses a-gleamin' like on Aaron's breastplate o' jedgment—onyxes,

berylses, carbunkles, jaspers—blood-purple and scarlet gold.

And thar on the tip bough, in the snake-spottled leaves, I seen yan leetle toodalong-bird snappin' his black and yaller bill, cockin' at the purty nap of the top-growin'dest fruit—and, lo! hit were a party-striped peach!

And he hollered ag'in: "*Stri-pey!—Stri-pey!*"

"Yis, sir, Brother Toodalong," I answers him; "hit's shore ruby-ripe fer timptation. And if you're aimin' to auction hit off to ole Adam ag'in, here's ole Solomon to bid up fer him. Stripey for ole Sol, ary pop!"

So up I clumb on yan log, walkin' hits len'th, till out I steps on the fork o' that paradise peach-tree, and up I retches for to pull the nighest peach thar; gin onc't more, the *third* time, that leetle serpent-tongued divvil hol-lered, "*Stri-pey!*" and I pulls the peach and chaws one bite to the rock of hit.

Then Lor' creation! all suddent the hull world o' timber tipped slanty, and yan ole moss-log riz up like thunder and shook hissself, and, "*Whee—ay-y-y—oo-oo-ee—yud! yud! yud!*"

thot-thar rot-stump raired hits muzzle and bel-
 lered wilderer than the Goldin Calf, and *rip-
 crash!* yan peach-tree were tore and shooken
 like hit were a wind cradle, and the peaches
 peltin' off down the mount'in like a hail pour-
 in'! And me hitself tossed high-upper than
 glory 'way-y-y high over Bab's Ridge, whirlin'
 and hangin' in the air to one busted tree-
 sprangle, like Jacob to his heavenly ladder
 spoke!

But 'way below under me, fur down yander
 on the mount'in-side, I seed a thunderin' buck-
 deer, pawin' on the aidge of a clift, rairin' up
 his moughty peach-tree antlers in the goldin
 noonshine.

What ye axin' me? How fur did I fall?

Well, I beat the fust—out the back gate o'
 Genesis! Chilluns, I fell from heaven all that-
 thar day from noon on, keepin' the ole sun com-
 p'ny; till jest as he were a-settin', I landed
 plumb down in my own goosefeather bed—and
 the core of a party-striped peach stickin' in my
 throat!

Now ain't that bein' borned lucky—at the
 last!

Nay, my rounders! I never didn't git to
cough hit out yit. Feel under my neck-skin—
the p'int of hit. Some calls hit the core of old
Adam's apple, but I calls hit ole Solomon's
peach-rock.

Two: HOG INN—AND OUT AG'IN!



HOG INN—AND OUT AG'IN!

THE diffryence between hogs and humans is mostly figgers. Hit's a toss-up betwixt a paar and two of a kind. That's what I allers arguid with my ole woman when she slack-jawed my mount'in sow, Chinkapin. (My ole woman was borned in Bluegrass.)

“Chinkapin,” I says to her, “hain’t no Bluegrass figger of a hog, like some other she-males I’s met up with. Chinkapin hain’t the blobb figger of a chuck-full mealpoke, with a leetle tie-twister for a nose-nub.”

| No, sir-r, chilluns! My ole Chinkapin her figger favored her raisin’ place. She were a mount’in-borned lady, pure razorback from toe to tail. Slab-sided and purty she were as ole Pine Mount’in hitself, and hit ivy-bristlin’. And spunky? Dad-fetch me! I seen her fit a crawfish on the middle of a foot-log high over the creek tide, and thirteen leetle shoats

danglin to her dugs yit suckin' thar. | She jist backed round and sot down on the claw-pinch-in' critter. Arter then I hadn't no needs for to fire-brand her buttocks. | Ef right now was Hog Jedgment Day, I'd claim her sperrit, hind to, riz up among a million.

Yit she war the dad-lostiest hog ever I hunted in the timber. I were allers trackin' her. And the most quarest places I found her at. Did I told ye how I traileed her onc't to Hog Inn? No-o? Yis, I did! Well, then, Hanky, hit was this-a-way.

Hog Inn were spoke to be a quar, hided-away place of meestery. Years o' my days I heern tell about hit in the mount'ins, how hit were kindly a losty place for moonstruck fellers and gals.

Some fiddlers I knewed said hit's whar dissatisfied stick-to-homers disappears to when they wants to git to be hustlin' up-to-timers.

Some preacher fellers sarmoned how Old Horny hissself tuck the nacheral image of a hog and was innkeeper thar, him runnin' a punch-

eon-floor boardin'-lodge for all sech-like Egyptians of the sperrit what goes hankerin' arter fleshpots. Hog Inn, they told, hung out hits moonshine lantern somewhars half-way betwixt the banks o' Jordan and Apollyon's Pit. But my ole woman said they warn't no sech a place—leastways for right-livin'd humans; she warn't consarned with no hog-fleshers.

Well, nor me nuther, except for my ole Chinkapin. She'd be'n stickin' round home for three operations of the moon, but now she were lit out ag'in and plumb lostid.

"I wonder," says I. "Jest afore dark I seed Chinky gapin' at the moonsickle over her left ear. Mebbe she's gone moony and she's puttin' up at Hog Inn."

"Ah, put up with her thar yourself!" grouched my ole woman, and slams the door on me.

"All right, then," thinks I, "I shore will. But where-all is Hog Inn at?"

Well, hit were nigh dusky dark then, and I goes trackin' the gloamin' fer a new trail.

"Soo-ey! Soo-ey!" I hollers. "Soo-ey, Chinky!"

But jist the echo hollers me back from the tall layin-trees; so I goes climbin' and huntin' the shadders ag'in.

Miles on, I stops in the deep pine.

"Soo-ey, Chinky! Where are ye?"

And this time seems like the echo she hollers fur off:

"Hog Inn!"

Then I legs hit faster and, about three mile on, I climbs out to a quar shelft o' the mount'in, the moonsickle peepin' over yander. Nigh thar was a dark woods of black-jack oaks, high and stillsome. Only jist a whippawill was a-whippin' her thar.

"Soo-ey, Chinkapin! Soo-ey!" I hollers.

"Hoggery Inn! Hoggery Inn!"

whippawill she whips me back.

Then I walks up nigh to the foot of a ol' dead holler gum-tree, and thar, on a broked-off limb, I sees two round green lights burnin' like fox-fires! Peared to be hangin' thar a double-eyed moonshine lantern, which hit were two-horned-tipped at the top.

“Heigh, now,” I speaks up, “ef you ain’t
• Old Horny’s sign of Hog Inn, the preachers
don’t know ye.”

*“Whoo- whoo- whoo- whoo
The deevil air you-ou?”*

hoolyhoos yan moonshiney lantern. Then she
winks one of her eye-shutters, shruggin’ out
two dusky wings, and hovers away in the shad-
ders.

Now, childers, that switched me blue!

Then all of a onc’t I hears the quarest fid-
dlin’ noise. Seems like hit were a thousand of
katydids scrapin’, and *kerplump!* somethin’
drapped on the ground clost by me, clean outen
the top of yan old dead gum-tree, and begun
fer to roll and scrabble like a critter.

“Soo-ey! Soo-ey!” I calls, and chases hit.

For thar I sees the crawfish sign on hits rump
in the moon. And shore ’nough, thar was my
ole Chinkapin hoofin’ her for the bottom of the
tree trunk, and me arter her.

“Soo-ey, Chinky!” I hollers, and grabs for
her tail-piece, but in she scrabbles to a gap-hole

in the bottom, and plumb disappears up the in'ards.

Right that same second, *kerplump!* draps another Hog-Inn boarder, landin' from a hole in the tree-top on the ground, and ag'in hit scrabbles for the gap-hole. That time hit were a pink-spottled dodger.

"Soo-ey, thar! Pig-go-wee!" I yells.

But in hit goes by me, plumb up.

And thar the whippawill hollered:

"Hog in—

And out ag'in!"

Lor, then, sech a scritch as yan lodgin'-house let out! For that-thar holler tree were plumb perpindickeler full o' hogs, each boarder hustlin' t' other from behind, so when piggie crowded in at the bottom, piggie squealed out at the top.

And, lo! onc't more, *kerplump!* here comes a gray-striper! Roll and squeal and scrabble, and up ag'in in'ards!

"Ladies' chain!" whipped the call-bird.

And here now come spillin' the hull chain-

gang, blue, yaller, gray, pink, pided, and spotted, bustin' off and linkin' up ag'in. And all the whiles, inside the tree, they was roarin' sech a grunt-squall, like a meet of holy-rollers mislickin' the words of Jordan Song:

*“Come jine Old Horny in Hoggery Inn,
Whar the puncheon beams is shakin’!
He balances up and he balances down
For to keep the lean in his bacon.”*

And shore 'nough, here draps a gret black boar, plumb on his hind hoofs, bristlin' like a brier-patch, two wild horns p'intin' outen his flop-ears. Jist he aims his slick, long snout like a gunbarrel, and *bang* he shoots in the gap-hole and up the gum-tree.—Yea, childers, how them gum-trees kin stretch!

And so the ring-round went rattlin', hog in at the bottom shovin' hog out at the top, one onended runnin'-set of pig-jigs, and the katydids scrapin' like a' all-fired cabinful o' fiddlers.

“Balant partners!” whipped the caller-out.
“Turn your cornders!”

And, lo, behold! thar ag'in come my Chink-

apin tumblin' her turn, *kerflop!* to my foot, and clips a back-summy-set, squealin'. That time, though, I grabbed shore of her tail-piece, straddled hind-to on her razor back, and "Heigh! Soo-ey, up!" I hollered, and away we—

Now, chilluns, ef ever you gab to my ole woman of me jinin' that Ladies' Chain—

No-o, Cindy-Ann, I hain't never told no human yit how yan rinktums ended. Only jist, next day, when ole Chinkapin was layin' in our cabin door, a-sunnin' her thar with her little shoats, and the fleas heel-and-toe dancin', my ole woman she suspicions me and clips out:

"So, Solomon," she says, "did you and Chinky done put up at Hog Inn last night?"

"Did us? Axe *her!*" says I.

And thar I jest stoops over at Chinkapin's left flop-ear, and I ristles saft, "Soo-ey, up!"

Heigh, gosh-hooks! Up then she jumps like franzy, the ole sow, summysets herself, squeals Yankee Doodle on a firin'-pan, butts my ole woman britch-sprawlin', lambastes the table—legs over—on the rollin' soup-pot, and plumb she scatters the fire-ashes like a snow-

squall, scrabblin' thar to wiggle Ladies' Chain
up the chimbly-stack.

Well—thar I stood between sow and suspi-
cion!

Nay, fellers, I never did aim to balanct part-
ners ag'in—not two of a kind to onc't!

Gals, don't never ye gape at the moon over
your left ear!

Three: THE CATS THAT CLAWED
TO HEAVEN



THE CATS THAT CLAWED TO HEAVEN

COME here'n, Hanky and Henny!
Quit your scratch-fightin'! Ef you
leetle twin fellers starts a clawin'-
match, you maht end up like the twin painter-
cats done.

Where-all did *they* end? They ended
plumb up in heaven, that's whar! My Gub!
Air ye aimin' to haul me into court fer testi-
mony? You'll shore raise to be jedge and
sheriff yit!

Well, yere's the evidence, then.—

Yis, painters is kindly overgrowed wildcats.
Some calls 'em mount'in-lions. Gittin' sca'cer
nowadays, but I's shot a sight in my time.

Me and Chunk Farley used to paar off and
go trackin' 'em. Chunk hissself was a crack
shot and 'lowed he could outaim me shootin'.

But I disputed him his record. Anyways, one evenin' us come to a show-down.

Preachin' Charlie Boggs had aimed to jine us huntin' that time, but me and Chunk skun off in the middle of his sarmon. Us had ben huntin' all daylight, and no luck yit. The corn-shuckin' moon were jist upp'in' her over the ridge, but she hadn't tipped to us in the shadder bottom. We was fordin' a branch. Both to onct, us stopped still, shin-deep in the tide.

Right thar on the crick bank laid a painter big's a cow-heifer. Two leetle cub-kittens was cuddlin' betwixt her paws. Tongue-lickin' 'em, she was, and never seen us.

Click! went our triggers to onct.

She lipt to her laigs, nosin' us, a-swarpin' her gret tail.

Bang! she rolled in the tide!

"I fotched her!" hollered Chunk.

"*Me*, you mean!" says I.

We had her up the bank in two jiffies, daid as a dollar.

"Right purty a hide for my ole woman," I says.

"The cat's mine," says Chunk. "Th' ain't but one bullet-hole in her."

"So there ain't," says I, "but I reckon we don't start no feud, Chunk. Let's we divvy the kittens."

Well, so we done hit. Yan two leetle yaller kits was curled up thar on the moss-bank, as like as two buttons, and purty as twin peas in a pod. Chunk picks up one cub-kit, and me t'other; but yit we stands starin' at the ole daid painter.

"Tell ye what, Chunk," says I. "We'll match for her."

"How?" he axes.

"With these-yere kittens. We'll keep 'em a six-month. You raise yourn, leetle Catcher, thar; and I'll raise mine, here, leetle Scratcher. Come next spring, we'll match 'em in a fightin'-bout: and whichever feller's cat licks t' other's, the owner of the champeen wins the ole painter's hide. Meanwhiles we'll salt the hide."

"Done!" says Chunk. So us skun the painter and went home.

Soon as hit was salted, us handed hit over to Preachin' Charlie to trustee hit as ompire.

Lorsy, the rinktums I had raisin' that cub-kitten, Scratcher!

Mice and rats—he'd set up midnights on the bed-quilt and eat 'em in alive! In three days there warn't a varmint on the place left. My ole woman got moughty peeved 'cause I had to restock our rat-famine with groundhogs to keep my tom-kit fed up for the prize match. My ole sow, Chinkapin, suspicioned him and sulked she wouldn't raise no shoat-babies that fall to feed cat-flesh. So she packed off. I's tell ye later whar I found her.

Meanwhiles little kit Scratcher was biggin' and biggin' to a half-grown'd painter-cat.

Well, at last come round the six-month mornin', and here come Chunk Farley leadin' Catcher, his twin half-grown'der, in a toggle-chain. Along with him was Preachin' Charlie, totin' the ole painter's hide. Redbuds was purty abloom, and us met up to my ole smoke-house, me with my Scratcher on a hitch-rope.

Jericho! Those cats shied like they was furreigners 'stid o' twin brothers. Bubbled up their backs like milk bilin', and spit fire and steam.

"Hold your fightin' partners!" hollers Preachin' Charlie. "Ef be I'm ompirin' this-yere cat-bout, hit's goin' to be fit out with eethical and mathematical kerrectitude. First-offly we settles the handicap."

Well, sirs, us up and weighed those cats on the balancers: tipped jist even, they did; not the ace of an ounce betwixt 'em.

Nextly we measured 'em, up, down, through, and acrosst, top to toe: not the haar of an inch between Catcher and Scratcher! Twins they was to a dot.

"Pint-blank even! Thar won't be no handicap," says Charlie; and then he laid down the law on our proceedin's.

Up he clumb on the smoke-house, lays hisself along the ridge-comb, retchin' out his hand with a hunk o' raw meat, which he steadies hit plump halfly on the tip-notch of the beam-saddle.

Meanwhiles, at the right-hand eavesdrip, Chunk raises his cat on the roof-slide, nose-up towards the meat, and holds on by the tail, keepin' the rump prezactly even with the eaves' aidge.

Likewise, on the left hand, I doos the very selfsame with *my* cat.

“Right smart aimed, fellers,” says Preachin’ Charlie, lookin’ down, each side, moughty judeecious. “The twin nozzles is p’inted plumb straight at the target. Now, then, arter I says grace on this-yer meat, when you hears me holler, ‘Haid on!’ you let go tails.”

So us shet our eyes whiles the preacher spoke him a few graceful words, beseechin’ a heavenly guidance fer the twins. Then we hears him holler out, “Haid on!”

Bing flew the tails, and me and Chunk was seein’ day-stars on our backs.

“Catcher!” Chunk yells.

“Scratcher!” I hollers.

Next thing we see was them cat-cubs top o’ the ridge-comb, haid on, with their jaws lock-jammed in the middle o’ that raw meat, clawin’ fer heaven.

“Topple him down, Catcher! Tumble him, Scratcher!”

We scritchd all dad-blazes!

But hit were jist vanity of vanities, callin’

'em back. Them twins was balanced plumb even and bound fer paradise.

For, ye see, Catcher was prezactly the same twin-strongness as Scratcher; and Scratcher was excisely the same twin-cleverness as Catcher. Neither one could outeven t'other. *Both* was champeens.

Nary cat couldn't down his twin, so the only way they could travel was *up*. And the more they nacherly clawed, the more they jist nacherly riz.

So thar they went clapper-clawin' in a yaller cloud, scratch-fightin' to glory, fur flyin' like goose-feathers, on up, neck and neck, nail and toe, crop and crupper, away on, spout-up'ards, like a razzle o' dead leaves in a whirl-storm.

Last thing us seen was a little fog-skiff, fadin' out, like the old moon by daytime, the fur feathers snowin' down.

"Dad-fetch ye, Preachin' Charlie!" says I. "What made ye so plumb matheematical?"

"What-all in tarnation did ye speak that heavenly grace fer?" axes Chunk, moughty sulkin'.

Preachin' Charlie slid down off the roof.

"I reckon, fellers," says he, "you won't be needin' me for ompire agin till the next jedg-ment risin'. Meanwhiles I'll jist trustee this-here salted hide."

So he went on home, packin' the ole painter's skin with him.

Poor Chunk he never come back to that smoke-house till six months arter then. Hit were corn-shuckin' time, our huntin' day come round agin.

I met him thar, and we stood neck and neck, starin' uply.—

The fur was fallin' thar yit.

Four: KING SOLOMON'S POWER-
PUMP



KING SOLOMON'S POWER-PUMP

DUCK your haid thar, Hanky! How kin I spit clare of ye, and you mug-gin' me in the face thataway?

Git to tell ye more about Chinkapin? Shore I will! I could talk ye deaf-dumb about yan ole sow.

She were the crawfish-huntin'dest critter I ever see. Told ye how she fit one on the foot-log. She hunted that feller hind-end-to, but mostly she hunted 'em nose-on. And that's how come I to be a water-power king in these-yere parts.

Crawdabs is the leggiest things in cr'ation, yit they kin claw theirselves into a hole slicker than a minute, and kin mine thar for water deep as coal-diggers.

Well, summer afore the Big Snow hit it were the Gret Droughth: hottest, dry-uppedest, dog-dayest time in the world! Couldn't only

loll your tongue out and laze around. Hit were a sight!

Green leaves curled up yaller on the timber. Crow-birds settin' in a gang thar, gappin' their beaks. God couldn't squeeze a song outen a mipkin lesser than a squawk. Ole Greasy Creek were drippin' a puny dreem like a sorghum barrel. The trails was dried up to salt.

Well, my ole sow, Chinkapin, she'd jist far-rered a new litter o' piggies, and her dugs was gone dry. So she 'lowed, I reckon, she'd go prospectin' for liquor to raise the gang.

Anyways, she squandered off, and arter a spell, as usual, I went huntin' of her. Fer me and Chinky us nacherly was chum-fellers, which hit were what allers grumbled my ole woman.

Well, I won't bescribe ye now the len'th and days o' my hunt in that all-fired droughth. I'll cut to the finish.

I were crawlin' up the dry bed o' Gabe's Branch, and I come to the head of a holler where there used to onct was a waterfall had fell high down off over a bench-rock. But nary a drap now!

And I were gazin' up thar, lickin' the thirst
 'of mimory, till slow thar I waked like in a
 dream. And thar in my dream hit come over
 the bench-rock, drip-fallin', the wet purtiest
 leetle water-stream, and run off down the
 branch-bed.

"Dad fetch me!" says I in my dream, "hit's
 gittin' moughtier and biggerer."

And right hit were so; for soon hit were
 roarin' down like a mill-dam shower, And up
 over beyand the bench-rock I heerd thar the
 quarest suck-chuggerin' noise, like hit were a
 gret stranglin'.

"Sol, air ye dreamin' fer shore?" says I.

"Dadburn me ef I be!" says Solomon.

And I climbs up over that bench-rock, and
 thar, on a leetle hollock beyand, I sees my ole
 sow Chinkapin, ring-arounded by her gang o'
 shoats, and her nose-snout glued in a ground-
 hole.

Doin'? What were she doin' of?

That's what I run thar to look.

Chilluns, hit were a crawfish hole, that's
 what! And thar she was pumpin' water with
 her snout from the bottom of hit—*chug-chug!*

chucky-chuck!—seventeen gallons a second, and the little shoats splashin' in the aidge of the tide. I up and kicked her in the snout and jest saved her babies bein' drowneded. And thar I measured the hole by drappin' a rock in. Hit were forty-nine foot deep with a plumb string.

The ole she-pump up and run fer home, squealin' a river-brook from her snout behint her. But I tuck arter her with the shoat-gang. To home she were moughty shy and shame-bashed, ole Chinkapin. She tried for to hide her snout under the cabin timber. Reckon she thought I'd onscREW hits gum-nozzle and pack hit to the fair, to hog first prize in water-weetchery. But I warn't huntin' blue ribbons.

I jist called my ole woman, and we catched a bushel o' crawdabs and planted 'em in our gyarden-patch holler. And afore night I had sicked the ole pumper-deevil at ary crawdab's hole in the patch and set her a-pumpin' thar with her snout end.

Well, sirs, next day I hired my neebors and builded a splash-dam. And all that summer and fall I sold 'em water for two bits a barrel, and run nine corn-grindin' mills in the creek-

bed o' Greasy. Folks do say that water-flux was cause o' the Big Snow come next winter.

Day and night in the mount'ins, miles round, ye could hear ole Chinkapin suck-chuggerin' thar. And that season she doubled her record litterin' new piggies, which I raised 'em to bacon and kep' the hull country from starvin' that year.

Yea, my rounders! When hit come for hog-flesh and water-power, that time o' the Gret Droughth they shore did call me King Solomon.

Five: THE HICK'RY PICK-TOOTH



THE HICK'RY PICK-TOOTH

THAT were a master prime supper ye dished us up, Aunt Sal, and I'll jist end her off now with my hick'ry picktooth. What, nappin' to bed this yerly! Leavin' me to the chilluns by the fire-coals, air ye? Shore 'nough! Turn in and welcome! Never gabble 'em no wild tales, me? Nay, Auntie, they gits only solid gospel from ole Sol. Good night to ye! (and good riddance!)

Well, young rounders, here we sot agin! Straddle my knee thar, Betsy!

Saddle my dog,
And bridle my hog—
And *away-y-y* we go!

Quit tuggin' of my bristles, Hank! Watch out, or I'll gobble ye yit!

Yis, yis, I's curried my mouth vittals with this-yere pick-tooth goin' on forty year now.

Feel her p'int thar! Hard as a nail-pin, hain't she, and slicker than bottle-glass! Well, chilluns, I's bottomed the cheers in nine cabins with the peel-bark of her. Yea, sirrees, with the bark of this-here hick'ry pick-tooth!

Won't believe hit, will ye? 'Bliged to tell ye the hull truth about hit, are I? Haw! Pop your ears, then!

Look at her clos'ter. Jist the len'th of my leetle finger, hain't she? Well, dadfetch her! I felled that pick-tooth with my ax in the year of the Big Snow. That same time she stood twenty-nine foot above the crust. Shore she's wored down some sence! That's what I'm historifyin' to ye. Will ye shet up, or listen?

The Big Snow—yea, that *were* a winter! Blewed and snowed night and day without no lettin' for twelve days, from dark of Ole Christmas eve to New Christmas mornin'.

Fust news o' the world I knowed in my cabin, come three leetle froze-to-death fox puppies tumblin' down the chimney-stack, *kerplash!* in the bilin' fire-pot, thawed out like lightnin', and run huntin' rats in my gum-boots. Well!

Me, I shoves a ladder quick up the stack, sticks my nose out through a round, small gap-hole in the driftit snow, and right thar I knocks noses with the ole fox-bitch herself, jist aimin' to foller her babies down yan burrer. So I axes her in, to take a week with me socianable. Meanwhiles I trains her tricks for to become a coon-houn'. For, thinks I, that 'u'd be right smart handy in the Big Snow, seein' as meat was gittin' sca'ce, and coon ain't so goll-fired ole-dead-fish-tasty as fox be.

So New Christmas mornin', owdaciously yerly, I kennels the fox-puppies snug in the butter-churn.

"Thar, Sister Fox-Bitch!" says I, "I's keepin' your babes o' the wood as redemption fer that batch o' coons you're to ketch for our meat-cupboard. So mind your houn' tricks!"

Then in I slips into my gum-boots, grabs my ax and rifle-gun, and up the stack I burrers outdoors, hackin' through the crust, my new fine-pretty coon-houn'-fox nosin' my heels.

Crack!—I come outen the cabin-dark! Whee, thar! The day-dawzzle on that snow creation most squint-blinded me. The hull

world were plumb snowed under, timber-deep, and they was a foot-thick crust froze over hit, blazin' like all Let-thar-be-light!

Couldn't see nothin' but two isinglass mount'ins, and me gappin' up thar from the fork-bottom of the valley betwixt 'em.

"Sister," says I to my houn'-fox-bitch, "yan ridges shore mought be Pine Mount'in and Black Mount'in, but where-all is the timber at was a-growin' thar Ole Christmas eve?"

But jist then I squintles 'way-y-y up to the top bench o' Pine Mount'in, and thar I spies one quar, only, lonesomest tree, seems like hit were a hick'ry, and dark, gobby humps clouded on hit.

"Sick 'em, Sister!" says I. "Yander's the onliest coon timber in sight. Mind of your babes in the butter-churn! Yan's your one chanct to redemption 'em."

So we starts trackin' up that slanty isinglass crust. Sister Fox-Bitch she tipped pretty on her toe-nail p'int. Ole Sol he clawed with his gum-boots till the soles buckled curly as sickle-blades. Golly bust me, how that icy wind blewed! Ary clip o' my breath hit froze

off in flapjacks, tinklin' and spatterin' behind,
 like I was spittin' winder-glass. And the drip
 o' my nose hit slung a double ice-rope retched
 out back o' my ears like two boar-tusks. . . .
 So us clumb to the ridge-top.

Zekiel! That *were* a huntin' day! I stood
 thar plumb jiggered.

"Tilt up your nose, Sister Houn'-Fox!" I
 stambers out. "Coon's in the cupboard! You's
 treed the hull country of 'em!"

And, lo! thar stood yan hick'ry, hits boughs
 droopin' down with bushels o' coons, clustered
 same's black bee-swarms!

Ye see, that come of the Big Snow. Whilst
 hit were fallin' them twelve days and nights,
 kivverin' the tops o' the timber, the hull coon
 tribe had tucken from tree to tree, risin' steady
 with the riz o' the snowdrift—on, tall to taller,
 till finaciously here hung all Israel of 'em,
 roostin' aloft on the dod-tallest onliest tree
 which topped hits tip above the crust—and hit
 was yan hick'ry!

Lamm!—I banged hits trunk with the flat o'
 my ax. *Kerflop!* fell the coons, curled up in
 scrambles, froze stiff. So thar I chained 'em all

together with their tail-links, and toggled the last link to the brush of Sister Fox-Bitch, and us aimed to start home.

“Hold, thar, Sol!” thinks I. “Yan hick’ry is the last timber in creation. Whilst ye kin, you’d better take home some peel-bark for to bottom a cheer what’ll last ye to sit in till this-yere Big Snow gits thawed away agin.”

“Kerrect, Solomon!” says I. And so I done hit.

I felled that hick’ry and bough-trimmed her; and I were jest split-peelin’ the last of her bark on the aidge o’ the mount’in, when Godfrey Day! suddent that skun pole lost her balanct, and *lippetty* she slided over the aidge, skiddin’ for the bottom o’ the valley.

I retched one grab for her and nigh toppled over, but I jist cotched myself by the haar of my houn-fox, and I stood thar gapin’ after yan hick’ry pole skiddin’ down the crust—slicker than lightnin’ on a lard-piggin!

Slick she went down Pine Mount’in and slewed the fork up Black Mount’in. Down she slid Black Mount’in, sluiced the bottom, and balanced up Pine agin. Thar, jist as I

retched for to grabble her, back she double-tracked herself on the same slickery trail. And so she teetered—Pine and Black, Black and Pine, downsy-up, upsy-down, see-saw-seein' her thar, tick-tockin' to etarnity like the swing of the Lord's clock-lead.

And all the whiles she war littlin' lesser and lesserer; yit still she was temperin' harder and harder. For, ye see, my rounders, the slide-down het her all-fired hot and smelted her, yit the slow-up froze and chipped her and wored her off.

And so she mought of plumb weared herself to death, like the moon wanin' to her dark, if hadn't ben how the wind suddent shifted south and, jest in the nick, the Big Snow begun to thaw, and me and fox put off home in the flood freshet, jist salvagin' our coon train. So thar in the bottom I saved the last leavin's of that hick'-ry, and brung home—this-here leetle pick-tooth!

Yis, Hanky! And this-yer coon-skin cap is the last leavin's of the chain-gang what Sister Fox-Bitch toted home with her tail-bresh.

And her leetle fox-pups? Yis, sir, their ole

maw redemptioned 'em; and that butter-churn become to be a kennel for raisin' coon-houn'-foxes the country over.

Haw, but Goshun, childers! Think what-all mought of behappened if I hadn't jist weared them gum-boots that crusty mornin'! What ef ole Sol had slipped over the aidge of Pine Mount'in, 'stid o' yan hick'ry pole, and *him* had skidded that slickery ice downsy-up, see-saw-seein', chippin' off and wearin' down like the ole moon-ball!

Yea, at that same gait of gittin' lesser in littlishness, I plumb would have wored away down to a babe agin—and my ole mammy sucklin' me!

That shore would have quit me pickin' my teeth of gospel truth!

Six: SI CROOKER'S FAST
FERTILIZER



SI CROOKER'S FAST FERTILIZER

NOWADAYS, chilluns, this world is a-gittin' too all-fired fast and een-ventioned. Folks is fastenin' beyand their wind-power.

The Lord takes His own time, but yit they's some folks 'low they kin outleg Him on His green pastur's. Well, sirs, I tells 'em, if ary feller aims to borry God's grindstone for to whet his brains, he'd better watch how he don't sharp his own haid off.

Ole Si Crooker he war jist sech a feller. He were one o' these-yere sharp-witters what they calls theirselves eeventioners.

He 'lowed he'd git ahead o' God on the seasons. He clean fergitted what the Lord Hisself said to Noay next mornin' arter the flood:

"While the airth remaineth, Noay," he says, "seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, they sha'n't never nowise cease."

But ole Si he aimed he'd 'bolish 'em all with one crack of his wits. Well, and mebbe he done hit, too. I'll give ye the fac's. You kin moral 'em for yerselves.

Si Crooker war a gunsmith by trade. His prime eenvention were his gret coon rifle-gun. Hit aimed to shoot a coon round and up a tree. Hits barrel were six cubits and a span long, crookled same's a cork-puller, and hits bore wimble-grooved. Si mounted hit on a gum stump and aimed hit to shoot all Pine Mount'in clean o' coons.—*Did* hit shoot 'em? I said Si *aimed* hit thataway.

Well, Si, he neebored me down the branch, a smart leetle ways above Greasy. Me and my ole woman knewed him when us was fust tied in wedlock. In them days the signs of the ole Injun plantation was plainerer thar in the bot-tom than now they is. The runnin' trails was wored down slick whar the Black Hawks rid their racin' ponies fer oncountless years at their game-follerin' powwows. Si hissself claimed Injun blood, and he builded his cabin thar, one

o' the fust half-whiters, and he traded in the
 • last racin' pony for a boodget of liquor.

That-thar pony war a leetle pieded stallion quick-leggeder than a chinch-weevil. He war one packed ball o' thunder and slick lightnin'. Mazin'dest hoof-critter ever I seed! Outwing a swaller, he would, and plumb beat a honey-bee on the home stretch. Dad-blazin'dest fastest racer in the Kaintuck ridges! They warn't nary nag-owner was fool enough for to race his horseflesh agin *Akalúga*.

Yan was rightly his Injun name, *Akalúga*, which hit bein' interpreted was *Windstorm*. I allers Englished him, the little deevil, but Si in generally stuck to Injun.

Well, fust when I knewed him, little Windstorm was gittin' most ancierter than Abraham and gray-whiter than Chakorny bloom.

But that didn't nohow trouble Si. Si still kep' him in stud, lettin' on, I reckon, he'd mate him yit with some angel-winged mare o' paradise from the happy huntin'-grounds, and repoperlate the county with the old Injun racers. Meanwhiles he studied to use him for one of his

conventionin's. I found Si one day to his cabin, whar he told me about hit.

"Sol," says he, "yan pony o' mine is onmortal. His life'll outrun the livin'dest on airth. Why wouldn't hit? Thousands o' years of racin' is bred into his bones. His forebears has ben fertilized with fastness ever sence Ham left ole Shem and Japheth for to start the Injun tribe. Yea, feller," says he, "my *Akalúga* is onmortally fast bred in the bone. And that's how he perfectures my brandest new eenvention."

"Which brandest new?" I axes. "What is hit?"

"Well, I calls hit '*Akalúga Junior*, the World's Fastest Fertilizer.' "

And Si he turned him and bended over a gret black kittle-pot.

"Dad gumption!" I whistles. "Air ye aimin' to bile down yan pony fer bone manure?"

"No, sir!" he quicked back at me. "I's aimin' to powder his hooves." Then he pierted up through his long-hangin'd haar and p'inted in the kittle. "Look-a-thar!"

Well, I overed my haid and peeked in. Hit were nigh half full of a yaller dust, looked like ash dirt.

"Hit's file scrapin's," says he. "I files off his hooves, ary time I shoes him, and I saves the file-dustin's thar."

"But that'll jist nacherly make glue," says I.

"Shore 't will," says he, "ef you leaves hit jist nacheral. But I mixes hit!"

"What with?" I axes.

"Yea, now, that's my own meestical secret process," says he. Then he chisted out and chuckled to hissself pierter than a rooster. "All the same, Sol, I'll go ye halves with the mees-tery and the proceeds, ef be you'll holp me out fer witness on the fust expeerimint. For between me and you, I's dud-dratted to go hit alone."

"Why fer?" says I, gittin' cur'ouser.

"Well, Solomon," he stambered, "I suspi-cion I's kindly discovered sech an onhuly com-bination what's li'ble to topsyturn the etarnal laws o' Ginesis."

"Hold on!" I begun for to cough out.

"Oh, I see! Hold *back*, ye mean," he slied

at me. "I guess you hain't the sand to go shares in my glory. Stumped at the stand-in, ain't ye, Sol?"

"No, sirree!" I rips back. "I hain't never stood no stumpin' yit. I warn't holdin' back on myself. I were jist easin' off on my ole woman. She's moughty ticklesome crossin' the will o' scriptur'. But ef be you'll leave *her* plumb outen this consarn, I'll resk to go ye hull hog, huly or onhuly. And thar's my hand on't, Sol."

"All right, partner," he winks to me. "We leaves your ole woman plumb out of hit. This-yer business consarn will operate jist—*Sol and Si.*"

Then he rummages in a cornder and sets a pail-bucket over nigh the kittle-pot, and squats hissself down betwixt 'em.

"Well, Si, and what-all is your secret meixture?" I plumps at him.

"Jest a jiffy, Sol," says he. "Master eenventions is founded in the meestery of reason. My brandest new un plumbs moughty deep in the mind. I'll give ye the rationability of hit."

So he retched round amid his gun-gearin's
 • and picked out an ole powder horn.

"Yere's what give me the foundation idee:
 horn-bone and gunpowder. I jist puts two
 and two togither. First-offly, with the horn-
 bone:

"What's the fastest racin' critter ever raised
 in the world? My Injun pony, *Akalúga*.
 Whar at is his fastness located in? In his laigs.
 What's the fastest locality in his laigs? His
 hooves. What's the fastest part of his hooves?
 Why, the horn-bone tipses, o' course. Well,
 yander kittle is half full of 'em!—Git that fur,
 do ye?"

"Shore!" I answers him.

"Now, then, second-offly: What's the fastest
 powder in the world? Gunpowder. Whar at
 is *hits* fastness located in? In hits saltpeter.
 And whar in is the fastest saltpeter located at?
 At Si Crooker's peter-mine.—Thar, Sol! Yan-
 der's a bushel-pail o' peter I fetched from the
 mine this mornin'."

Si riz, and picked up the pail and held hit
 over the kittle—still rattlin' on of his tongue:

"Now ag'in, next-offly. Puttin' two and two together, I fertilizes thot-thar fastness with this-yere fastness and jines the combination. So what-all the mind of Eenvention hath jined let no man put asunder, till death or disruption do him part!"

"Amen!" I prays up.

Then Si pours out the pail in the kittle, and stirs the mixin' with the poke-stick, with me peekin' on, half balanct to jump fer an explosion.

"Last-offly," hollers Si, raisin' his both arms like a preacher. "Lo, now! Beholt the offsprig of this-here wedlock is cradled a'riddy in the kittle-pot, and hereby I christens thee, in the name o' thy ole sire, '*Akalúga Junior*,'—the fastest fertilizer yit borned!"

Well, rounders, I aimed my eye in that kittle-cradle for to sight the offsprig.

"Si," I says, "'pears like hit's a shame to oncompliment the new-borned, but this-yere *Junior* 'pears to favor plain yaller dirt."

"By their fruitses they shall be beknownst," he answers me. "This-here yaller dirt shall yit abolish the nacheral seasons."

"How will hit?" I axes.

"By hits fast manureness," says he, uppin' his voice. "One handful of hit sprinkled on a gyardin patch shall fertilize fifty craps to one moon operation. Yan kittleful shall reevolution the county."

"How do you know hit shall?" I axes ag'in.

"Fust by rationability, and last by expeeriment!" yells back Si, gittin' hotted. "And seein' you hain't none o' the fust, Sol, come along now and holp me pack this kittle-pot. Hit's too moughty a fortune to leave ary pickin's behind fer robber-thiefs."

"Shore!" says I. "But whar will us pack hit to?"

"To your dadburned turnip-patch!" he hollers. "And mind ye, I goes halves on the crap."

"That were agreed, partner," I humble-pies him.

And so us starts up the trail, packin' the kittle-pot between us.

Seven: THE FLEA-HUNTIN'DEST
NIGHT



THE FLEA-HUNTIN'DEST NIGHT

NOW, thar, leetle rounders, I 'low that's enough gab for one settin'. I's a-gittin' too cracky. Let that I limber my knee-j'int's, Hank! You's got me coiled like a scrooged copperhaid. Peg off to bed, now!

"No-o, sirree, Uncle Sol!"—Heigh?—Aim to hear whar we tuck that kittle-pot, do ye? Death, or deliver up! Now what chanct has poor ole Sol Goliah agin a hull cabinful of leetle David'ses tongue-slingin' him? Stiddy, thar! I delivers up!

Well, so me and Si Crooker us tuck a cross-cut, by the old Injun trail, up towards my turnip-patch. But afore we hadn't clumb funderer than a long sang-call, that kittle-pot was a-gittin' heavy's a full coal-tipple, and the sun-down hit cloudin' up darkish under one o' these-

yere black thunder-bonnets, which the goldy lightnin's was needlin' hit with their prickle p'int's.

So thar us sagged that kittle down and buttocked ourselves on the rim-bench.

"Si," I says, "hit's onlucky for to start out a new-borned business consarn at the dyin' of daylight. If we uns is huntin' fer glory, us'll find hit on the aidge of sun-up in the middle o' my turnip-patch. Meanwhiles my ole woman has supper to home and snug a night lodgin'. That's her a-hollerin' now. What say we turn in fer supper?"

"I says hit," spoke Si. And so we done. . . .

"Now massiful sakes, Solomon Shell," squeals up my ole woman, "what likes of a supper mess air you fellers bringin' here in yan kittle iron?"

"Windstorm and peter," I says. "Hits looks like hit'll weather yeasty afore mornin', Suke." (Dadfetch me, chilluns! I didn't know what-all I was prophesyin'!)

"*Akalúga Junior*," pipes up Si. "Hit's the brand-newest, fastest—"

"Shet up, Si!" I ristles him, winkin' towards

the ole woman. "You hain't fergittin' our shake-hand on jist *Sol and Si*, air ye?"

Then I pulls a quilt-kivver offen the bed and throws hit over the kittle, and talks up louder. "Git ye a cheer, Si, and take a sop with usns."

"Seecrets as usual!" my woman she humps out, sarcasticky. "Whar ye ben dodgin' at all day, Sol? You's shore the ontellin'dest critter in your times and seasons."

"They won't be no more times and seasons," bumbles Si, soppin' his corn-pone in the bean coffee.

"No-o-o?" eckers my Suke, curvin' up her eyebrow haars like two kitten-backs. "No times and seasons no more? How won't they?"

"Not 'cordin' to the *ancient* almanack they won't be," says Si, chawin' easy.

But I were chawin' moughty *oneasy*. I was studyin' how to change the argymint graceful afore he broke with Scriptur'.

"Cause, ye see, fellers," raised up Si agin, "my brandest newest eenvention—"

"Lorsy, Suke!" I busts out. "Whar in the name o' homelikeness is ole Chinkapin at?"

"Now whar in the name o' suckin' shoats would she be at, the ole sow? Out in the back palin', where her belongs to."

"Needsn't bite my haid off, ole woman! 'Tain't socianable to neebors, lackin' her comp'ny fer supper. I'll pime-blank have her in—ole Chinky."

So I jist hollers "Sooeey, here!" and in she come on the run-grunt, wallerin' her piggies with her.

Well, childers, that gratesomely changed the argymint; and seein' how night was darkin' down, and hit thunder growlin', us was soon all nosin' fer sleep.

"I 'low," says I, "we won't tetch a light afore turnin' in. Take yan bed in the cornder, Si. Me and my ole woman doubles in this-here."

Si straddled over Chinkapin, and tuck three turns round the kivered-up kittle, spittin' on hit three times fer luck. Then us all turned in the goose-feathers.

Next thing, though, my ole woman heaves out her laigs ag'in, and she calls over:

"Hold a minute, Si Crooker! Hit's a-gittin' moughty wind-drafty. You'll be wantin' yan

quilt-kivver afore dayrise—and consarn my ole man for pullin' hit offen your bed!”

“Much obleeged for hit, ma'am,” peeps up Si.

“Nohow he hain't obleeged for hit!” I hol-lers. “You leave hit lay over the kittle, ole woman!”

Dud drat her! She teeters round that kittle in the shadder dark, a-yankin' back that quilt-kivver, and tucks up ole Si with hit in his bed, same's a two-year-old. Then she plumps into our feathers ag'in and rumbles in my right ear: “What-all is that tarnal smellin' pizen powder you's hev in the kittle-pot?”

“No consarn o' womankind!” I grouches her back.

“Well, Sol,” she says, “I shook out a good fist of hit in yan quilt-kivver for a prime flea-pizen. I hopes Si kin stand his nose in hit.”

“Si's nose is nacherly used to hit,” says I. “But don't you go robbin' no more fistfuls. Hit's w'uth hits weight in a thousand of goldin craps.”

“Don't *you* go crappin' my ears with no sech nonsetty! You go to sleep, Sol!”

Well, childers, who wouldn't in sech a pinch? So I did.

Yea, Tyre and Sidon! what a nightmare I rid in that dream slumber! Hit shore were the buckin'dest nag o' midnight what man ever grabbed the tail of, and hit rairin' hind-end to the roarin' of Judgment, pitchin' and neighin' and bellerin' with the prayer-meetin' voice of ole Si Crooker:

"O Lor' g'amighty!" he were hollerin', "I didn't nohow never aimed to 'bolish your seasons with live stock. I were purely aimin' at agreecultur'. Jist only hit were lilies and turnips o' the field I was studyin' to fertilize with fastness. But O, Lord of moughty eenventions! you works in a meesterious way your lightnin' transmigrations to perform. Lo, now, beholt, you has converted my dreamful bed o' turnips to this-yere battle of quilt-varmint!"

And right then that night-nag o' mine kick-busted me clare on to the middle o' my ole woman, the both of us settin' bang-up on the bolster, starin' at a lit pine torch in the blood-drippin' hand of ole Si Crooker, baar-shanked in his shirty-tail.

Thunder hit were boomin' from the ridge-beam; murder were shoat-squealin' from the cornders; and thar in the trickly shadders Si was a God-prayin', Eden-naked to the britch, in the middist of an onhuly congregation of six-legged hedge-hoggy critters scramblin' the quilt-kivver and the floor.

Ary critter had a long pole-snout like a prunin'-hook, and one trainband was aimin' theirs plumb at ole Si, like a ambush o' bristlin' bay'net-knives; and anither ribbel battalion was slaughter-housin' the leetle shoats, jab-stabbin' ole Capt'in Chinkapin, which she stood squallin' in a red wamble o' blood, fitted to fury.

"Rivelation!" scritchd my ole woman.
 "They's riz from the flea-pizen."

"Pizen!" I yells. "'Tain't pizen! Hits Fast Fertilizer! They's the fleas of the Apoc-
 alysm!"

Well, right thar ary one o' that fertilized flea-squad tetched the trigger of hits six-barrel laigs and comminced jumpin'. Dadswoggle me! Yan racketin' was like a rigimint o' steel traps firin' blank charges in a holler log.

Them critters, their shankses was triple-

swivveled to clamp-springs what 'u'd raise Lazarus ninety foot a second; so, chilluns, you kin jedge how fast them jiggerin' flea-hogs hitted the ceilin'. Loose banged all the punch-cons of my cabin-loft, they did, drappin' down the swing-shelfs, so here come cookin'-pans, reel yarn, piggins, gourds, beanses, cardin'-combs, pants, bonnets, quiltin'-frames, and bottle glass, jamblin' down together in one mess o' mankind and hog variety!

Indoors that shore doused poor, shave-tail Si and his pine-lamp, but outside the wind blewed in a wild rain flood through the open door, whar the sheet lightnin's blazed like shutterin' daylight, so us could see prime to start yan flea-hog huntin'.

"Yere's my britch-pistol, ole woman!" I hollers to Suke.

She grabs hit. I grips up my rifle-gun. Si collared a broad-ax, but he like to drap hit. He jist p'inted and groaned.

"Oooh, Godfrey, look-a-thar, Sol! They's one landed in the kittle-pot!"

Yea, shore enough! Most horriblest sight in

my life, hit was settin' thar,—right thar in the kittle hitself, hits rump plumb rooted in *Akalúga Junior*,—thunderin' big of a hog-bellied flea-critter!

Right thar, in the face of us, hit veesibly sprouted and swole, hits eyes growin' same's green taters, bristles shootin' like bog-grass, and hitself bulgin' and biggin' to the swolleness of a gourd-necked, purple wild boar.

Faster and fasterer hit swole and fertilized! Hits dadburned long beak was a-retchin' hits reap-sickle for to harvest Si's shirty-tail; and poor Si hisself stood gap'-frozen thar, peeled most to Adam and stounded with the remorse of eenvention,—when, right in the nick, my ole woman she blazed away with my britch-pistol.

Dad-bless her for onc't! Yan bullet cut the spell. That-thar Apocalypter busted like a glass demijohn. The flea-splinders flewed same's hail-grit, but they jist peppered poor Si to courage and conquerdom. From that minute on, us swung into the skarmish, all three, like we was franzy-'spired.

I banged with my rifle-gun and bottle-busted

five at one aim.—Si broad-axed seven in the air between the quilt-kivver and the loft.—Suke never pondered to reload the pistol, but she grabbed her churn battlin'-stick and jist descended to the rescue of them yit onmurdered shoats under the bed-beams. One-handed in the dark, she dive-plunged in yan squealin' blood-splutter. Thar she salvaged two thirds of Chinkapin's litter, and delivered the balanc't outen the beaks of the flea Philistines to the ole sow capt'in. (My Chinky never did fergit that han'someness of a feller shemale. In after days, hit kindly healed a breach between her and the ole woman.)

Well, rounders, that were the pinnacle of the battle! From thar for'ard, the fightin'-ground shifted to the back yard; for them jumpin' scions of *Akalúga Junior* felt their old ancient racin' blood and tuck outdoors for the Injun trails. Yea, but us tuck after 'em!

Si loaded then, and I popped. Rain and thunder roared back from the mount'in dark. Spells o' jag-lightnin' claired up the palin' tops o' my cabin-yard and yan rout o' the Fast-Fertilized, flea-hoppin' for the high timber.

Thar I sighted 'em ag'inst the thunder-balls, and some I busted *spang* on the high-jump. For 't warn't no use tryin' to herd 'em in the palin'. Them spring-triggers would clare a gum-tree with one shoot o' their shankses. Some landed up in crows' nests and sot the ole crow-birds squawkin'. Some raced fer to jine the coon tribe, and some the wild cats. Yea, sirs! In the meestery of their fastness, they-all tuck to the hills.

In forty seconds my cabin yard was clean of 'em. But hit were forty days later afore my creek-neebors could muster out a flea-hunt party big enough to clean out Pine Mount'in.

Varmints of eenvention! Us war a moughty bleedin' trinity of humans what gazed ag'in at our goose-feathers!

My ole woman was stuck fearsome in the stummick; and me, I were reap-hooked fore and hind. Ole Si—they warn't much more than courage left of his shirty-tail, but the balanct were triumphant. He jist stood thar, bumblin' to hisself:

“*Akalúga Junior!*—Windstorm and peter done hit! But O Lord, never ag'in!”

As fer me, chilluns, whenever I lays eyes on a quilt-kivver, I thanks God A'mighty for *on-*fastness and *one*vention. Dadswither me, if that warn't the flea-huntin'dest night in all my days!

Eight: THE SPERRIT OF
AKALÚGA JUNIOR



THE SPERRIT OF
AKALÚGA JUNIOR

THE SPERRIT OF *AKALÛGA JUNIOR*

SHORE, shore, Aunt Sal! I's trapsin' off now. Course I won't keep the childers from their goose-feathers. I were jist bewarin' 'em agin these-yere brought-on flea-powders.—Soho? Hight-tighty! So you hitself heerd me telling' 'em, did ye?—Behint the loom thar?—No sech on-gospelless trash fer you!

Then I 'low you ain't aimin' to hear what-all behappened to yan kittle-pot!—How's that? You cain't larn a cracked nut to shut-to ag'in?—No more you cain't, Auntie! And ole Sol *his* shell is packed too tight to hold from crack-in'.—So, 'fore I quits, I 'low these childers are aimin' to hear what behappened to the balanc't of yan kittle-pot mess.

So thar come dayrise! That flea-huntin'dest night was done departed. I peeked to the cornder.

"Heigh, ole woman, whar's Si? His bed's plumb impty!"

"Well, which ole woman be I, Solomon, yourn, or hisn?"

That shore did me dumb. I riz and clumb over that hodge-muddle o' midnight. I hunted the premises. Outdoors, the survivin' shoats was duckin' in the rain-puddles; and thar indoors stood the kittle-pot; but nare Si, and no Chinkapin.

Daresn't tackle my ole woman ag'in, so us jist breakfasted gab-shet. . . . Passed a long settin' spell; sun slanted over the doorsill, and us still glummin' thar. . . . Suddent here come two shadders, Si and ole Chinky, snoutin' his shins, both lookin' bashfaced. Si kep' one hand in his poke.

"Whar you ben at, you fellers?"

Si whistled a leetle grain of a sperritual.

"Tuck a turn in your turnip-patch, Sol."

"Hark a-here, Si Crooker, who prayed to God in the night time—'never ag'in'?"

"Me, Sol. And I lives by prayer hinceforthly. I prays ye to holp me tote this-yere kittle-pot."

"Whar to, I'm axin' ye?"

"Up yonders, to the middle of yan rock-heap on Grave-slab Ridge. Yander is the eternal cimitery of my eenventionin'."

"That's the fust word o' gospel conversion he's outed," says my ole woman. "Holp him to keep hit, Solomon!"

Well, my night wounds was jest scabbin' over, so I answered Si's prayer quick-off. Si tuck a hoe, and me a mattock.

By noontime me and him was a-standin' on the midmost peak of Grave-slab Ridge, low-erin' down *Akalúga Junior*, in his kittle-coffin, to his lastiest rest. Ole Chinkapin war the only witness.

Mattock and hoe done the balanct. Us scraped in the aidge of the rock-heap and evened hit over, tarryin' one minute for silent-ful tears. Then us started home for the bot-tom, all three. But right the fust turn o' the trail, Si he retches one hand in his poke and starts back a ways.

"What-all ye doin' now?" I hollers after him.

"Jist leavin' one leetle bloom fer remim-

brance, Solomon. I pulled hit in your patch."

Then outen his poke he tuck what hit 'peared like a yaller-topped turnip, and he threwed hit to the middle of the rock-heap, wavin' one hand while he turned ag'in.

So us footed hit back home'ards, moughty solid-faced the hull trail. In the bottom Si tuck the down crick, and me the up, and soon I walks in on my ole woman, buryin' the leavin's of the shoat murder in our back yard.

"Howdy!" I says.

"Howdy, yourself!—Whar's Chinkapin? The livin'd orphants is squealin' for her."

"Chinky? Dadburn the ole sow, I thought her was at my heels. Last night must o' kindly onmothered her sperrit. I 'low I's better climb back and git her for the orphants."

"I 'low you's better had," she says.

Goshhooks! I war hongry for dinner then. The noon flies was pesterin' my flea-sores, and I jist dadburned the hull blazin' trail back up Grave-slab Mount'in.

"Ef only I plumb had you now, ole Chinky!" I were growlin'. "Whar the deevil

is yan rock heap, anyhow? Heigh, thar! What-all of a timber acre is this-here a-grow-in'?"

Chilluns o' goodness, jest listen me! I gives you my gospel word I were standin' ag'in on the midmost peak of ole Grave-slab, right nigh whar us buried that kittle-pot. Only now, right thar, I were standin' in the cool, dark shadder of the dad-wonderest, spreadin'dest palm-tree which ever overshadowed creation.

The rocks theirselves to my feet was a-growin' the greenest, dew-drippin'dest moss, with scarletty wax-berries, and hit deep saft as lamb's wool. Over hit I treaded same's on pided kivver patterns. In thar funder and funder, hided from the day, till lastly, right outen the darkish middle of yan rock-heap, riz up thar the towerin' trunk hitself of that palm-tree, and hit bottomed on a thunderin' big yaller knob same's a beehive ridge-comb.

Well, thar I were jist gapin' up'ards, when I slips on a moss rock, and down I topples over in a great groundhog's hole. *Slip-whizz!* I slides down hit, slantin' p'int-blank into the

mid-root o' that palm-tree, and *bimm!* I lands on the back o' yan groundhog hitself, plumb straddle o' my ole Chinkapin.

Me or her—I dunno which-a-one squallt the louderest. But jist I were rubbin' the slickery mash from my eyelids, when here comes a light-dawzzle which hit half shet-blinded me, and my yeres dingin' with the yell of ole Si Crooker bawlin' of me:

“Heigh, thar, Solomon Shell! Ye’re moughty welcome to our diggin’s, but next time watch out to wear your gum-boots down the back stairs.”

Now thar stood Si, swingin’ a baar-oil lamp. Seemed like hit were lightin’ up a gret goldin cave, and us in the bottom.

“Whar be I, Si?”

“In my turned-down teepee, Sol. Hit’s my brandest last eenvention—leastways mine and Chinky’s. Sence last night, the ole sow’s ben huntin’ a new home, more funder removed from the perils of domeestic live-stock. So she holped me to holler out this-yere underground retreat, and we’s jist moved in.”

“But what *are* this-here retreat, Si?”

"Hit's the compassionate bowels of that turnip bulb which I throwed behind on the rock-heap. Hit tuck fast root in the grave of *Akalûga Junior*, which hits fertilizin' fastness has growed this accommodatin' vegetable. This-here is the scooped-out middle of hit. Account of hits nacheral figger and the callin' of my ole Injun blood, I calls hit my eenverted teepee. Yea, Solomon! You's landed plumb down in the inmost shrine of eenvention, and here we's a-settin' now sheltered from the wrath o' God."

"Si Crooker! hev you ben timpdefyin' the God o' Ginesis *ag'in!*"

"Why, yis," says he, "jest one last lick at his agreecultur'! Ye know how I aimed I'd take to turnips and 'bolish the nacheral seasons. So I's done hit. But now I rests in remorse. I's a-leavin' the world, Sol—for releegious reasons. Hinceforthly my eternal diggin's is here."

"Here! Why-fer, Si?"

"Why-fer *not*, Sol? Here all my worldish wants is supplied. Down-stairs, here is allers fresh turnip meat, and up-stairs, onendin' palm-shade. So ri'chere, bein' hided from the out-

'ard eyes o' jedgment, I's free to instil the in-'ard life jist purely with sperritual consolations agin the ole Wrath-to-Come."

"Yea, now!" says I. "Hit's a-gittin' clairer why ye located this-yere plant in the grave-tomb. All the same, Si, the ole Wrath-to-Come maht yit raise up and go walkin' the roof in the cool o' your palm-shade. Yea, massy! and his eyes o' Jedgment snoopin' down your back stairs, he maht be. How-all, then, will ye answer him, Si, ef ye hears him hollerin' up yander,—'Adam, whar be ye?'"

"Answer him? I's jist axe him the pass-word! How about hit, Solomon; will ye jine me here, and I'll pass hit to ye?"

"Si Crooker," I says, "I allers did crave sech a life of in'ard blessidness, so I shore *will* jine ye in one pass o' the ancient meestery; for I *hev* heern tell how this-yer turnip-mash kin make prime—"

"Hold!" ristles Si, "Retch your hand, fust!"

Then he ducks his haid, mysterious, swingin' his lamp in a shaddersome cornder o' the cave, and fatches out two bottle-neck gourds, which he hands one over to me.

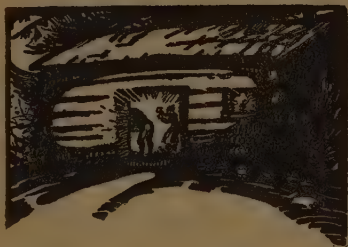
THE SPERRIT OF "AKALŪGA JUNIOR"

"Glory o' the lost departed!" I stambers, holdin' the mouth o' the gourd out on a plumb leevel line with my lip-whiskers: "Speakin' of sperrituous consolations,—what's the password, Si?"

Then Si, he raises *his* gourd, holdin' hit for'ard, chuck-even with mine in the blue glimber o' the lamp, and he sings out, high and meestical:

"THE SPERRIT OF AKALŪGA JUNIOR!—Sample hit, Solomon! Behold, how I told ye hit shall abolish the nacheral seasons. For lo, now! What-all the light of day hath be-tombed in airthly darkness—hath riz in etarnal moonshine!"

Nine: WHO-ALL'S BLACK HAT



WHO-ALL'S BLACK HAT

“**W**HAT brought-on feller have ye fotcht home with ye to-night, Solomon?”

My ole woman she scoured me from haid to foot with her eye-whippers. I were turnin' in the side gate to our cabin-yard, and jist I stock-stilled thar and gaped her back.

“Hain't fotcht nary feller home with me, Suke!”

“Yis, too, ye hev!”

“Yis, too, I hain't!”

“Quit triflin' the truth, Sol Shell! Sooner you gives me a peek at his middlin's, the sooner I kin jedge what I's to put in the supper-pot. Ef be I's to reckon the round of his girt by the len'th of his haid-piece, I 'low we hain't got gyarden truck enough to stay him overnight.”

“What kind o' tongue-brashin' air you aimin' of to-night, ole woman? I tells ye I hain't

brung no livin'd human along of me. Jest I's brung home Matty Shell for to mulk her, and yere she is!"

Matty Shell war our ole cow. Let down three bushel-pails o' milk, nights and mornin's, she use ter did, ole Matty. I were jist fetchin' her from the crick for to tether to a leetle apple-thorn in our yard palin', where I kep' her nights.

"No livin'd human along of ye, heigh?" pipes Suke.

"No, dadburn ye!" I hollers her.

"Then who-all's black hat is a-hangin' yan-der?"

And she p'int's her finger to a spike o' the palin' right fornenst the apple-thorn.

"Yea, suz!" I whistles. "Who-all's mought hit be fer shore?"

Right thar on the palin'-spike they was hangin' one o' these-yer long, round, top-loft hats, black's coal tar, same's county high-sheriffs and Bluegrass preachers wears to hangin's and funeralizin's. Kindly hit coned down to a narrer, small brow-band, which hit sprung a wide halft o' rim-collop; but the cone hitself

longed away up to a whale of a ridge-top, round-big as the settin' sun-ball. Top-side-up hit 'u'd right smart 'commerdate my ole woman for a bench-stool to set easy and smoke her pipe on.

"What-all of a Bluegrass preacher air you takin' on overnight, Suke?"

Well, the cut-lash she aimed at me with her right eye! I dodged hit behint ole Matty Shell's nuzzle and looked back betwixt her horns. Suke was plumb red-hotted.

"You bring on the haid-piece what belongs in yan hat, and I's make hit jaw *you* a preachment," she hollers. "Meanwhiles jist hand me over the hat hitself. I'll keep hit tight in-doors here, till called fer."

Well, I turns my head towards the palin'.

Nare a hat was hangin' thar.

"Hand hit up to me now, Solomon! Ye needsn't hide hit like who-all belongs to hit."

"Who's hidin' of hit?" I rumbles. "Not me!"

"Whar is hit, then?"

Chilluns, the ridge o' my spine-bone was commincin' to eetch and wiggle. I retched one

hand back o' me and one for'ard acrosst my eyes.

"What ye scratchin' fer?" Suke pierted at me.

"I's scratchin' fer that black hat. Hit's eetchin' me some'ars, dad-blesst ef I knows whar!"

"Scratch away then till ye gits the pox!" she hollers. And off she bangs indoors.

So I keeps rubbin' my eye-winkers, for nary hat could I see hangin' thar.

"What-all tuck hit?" I says to me. "Who-all's black hat were hit, anyhow?"

Then I turns slow and leads Matty Shell to the apple-thorn-tree agin the palin', and hitches her thar by her two horns. Then I sets the bushel-pail next her belly and gives her nose a pat, snuffin' round at me.

"Hold your dugs a minute, Matty ole gal, till I gits my mulkin' stool."

So up I steps to the cabin door and ducks over inside, retchin' for hit. Thar I grabs the stool, and jest I were raisin' back up till I turns my haid over my shoulder and looks at Matty Shell ag'in.

Shadder o' my life!—what did I seed thar?

Chilluns, I seed that thunderin' black hat thar, and who-all was a-settin' under the gret lid of hit but a leetle black man had his tight, long panty-laigs squattle-shanked under for-nenst Matty's belly, and his slim, black glove-fingers mulkin' of her dugs in the bushel-pail.

Lorgamighty! I turned and give one wink, and looked ag'in:

Nary hat nor man was thar!

But thar, round the belly o' that cow, they was crookled a slim, long black-snake, which his two-horned haid-piece was suckin' of her dugs—one arter t'other—in a wriggly ring-round.

Turned away, looked back: Thar sot the leetle black man, mulkin' ag'in.

Winked shet, and blinked open: Thar ag'in he were crookled—yan slim black-snake a-suckin' thar.

Well, childers, lucky fer me, I'd larned a thing or two from ole Gib Polly, our charm-doctor, how to cast out varmint and sech likes. A leetle grain of his doctrine holped me out thar, then, right in the nick.

"*Samuel*, twenty-four, fourteen!" thinks I. "Snakes is shore varmints, same's fleas—on a live cow or a daid dog."

So I ups and says to yan snake, the same as David says to ole Saul: "'*Arter whom,*'" I says, "'*is the king of Israel come out? Arter whom doos thou pursue? Arter a daid dog? Arter a flea?*'"

That settled him suckin' them cow-dugs, the black sarpent! Hit froze-charmed him, still as ole Time on a grave-slab.

Then I toe-tipped acrosst the yard and grabbed the p'int of his tail-piece and flipped him three jerks of my arm.

The fust flip snapped his crookles straight's a pipe-stem; the second snapped the bowl of his haid off; the third hit snapped his slim, long body into five len'th-pieces, which they was four laid thar on the ground like broke clay-brittle.

So then I sticks the tail-piece I was holdin' into my britch-poke, 'caiz ole Uncle Doc Gib he'd tol' me, long afore that, how to handle broke snakes: "Ef ye leave all the pieces lay, Sol," Gib says, "they'll combine

right back hull ag'in and run off on ye; but jist ef ye keeps a-holt of one piece and hide hit good an' dark, the balanct of the busted snake cain't never jine their parts ag'in to one hull-ness."

Well, I thanked Providence for the knowin' wisdom of ole Uncle Gib and the hully scriptur' of *Samuel*, and I set my mulkin'-stool next to Matty Shell's back laigs and retched for the bushel-pail.

But dadfetch that pail! Hit was plumb empty, and Matty's dug-bag was weezened up weeny as a heifer's.—I jest riz up thar and cussed lively.

"That dod black-hatter! He's done drouhted ye dry, Matty Shell!"

But my ole Suke ben a-watchin' all this from the cabin door.

"Yis, Solomon," she cut in, "I 'lowed from the start who-all belonged to that hat. Raise up your eyes from Matty's dugs and gaze 'em to her skull-piece."

So I upped and gazed.

The haid o' that cow was smooth bare as a new-borned calf critter. The hitch-rope was

hangin' down loose from that apple-thorn-tree. Clare to gracious, I nigh swallowed my neck-bean! "

"Where-all is her horns at, ole woman?" I coughs up.

Suke answers me back, sweet's last year's cider juice.

"I 'low the horns is under the hat, ole man!"

And she banged indoors ag'in.

Well, I 'lowed they war, too. My spine-bone was wigglin' worser than fust-off.

"Sol," I axes, "ef the horns is under the hat, where-all is the hat on?"

"Hit's on who-all is under the horns, Solomon," I answers me.

So, that bein' all the gospel I could git on the question, and bein' how nightfall was shadderin', I hitches Matty Shell ag'in by her left fore laig to the apple-thorn, and I pegs in fer supper with Suke. . . .

Rounders, you kin jest pictur' the peace on airth of that onmilkless meal of ourn!

"What price did who-all pay ye for them horns and dugs?" says the better halft o' me.

"What fee doos *you* axe a Bluegrass preacher fer a night's lodgin'?" answers up her worster halft.

The balanct o' that night were likewise. About the middle, yan little snake-tail come loost in bed from my britch-poke and tuck to wrigglin' fer Suke's haid-piller. That shore raised the ole ruction of Eve an' Adam all over ag'in till day broke.

Then I riz and peeked out the door, to look whether Matty Shell were wearin' a black hat yit.

Glory of sun-up hit were dapplin' her hornless haid and her purty flankes by the apple-thorn-tree, and her milk-poke war swole big ag'in; and right thar, in the shadder of her belly, they was four leetle quarter-small black men, toe-tippin' to retch her duggs with their weensy hands, which they was passin' round one big black hat-piece in a ring thar, neck and neck.

"Heigh, Suke! Thar's the black hat ag'in!"

"Who-all's wearin' of hit?" she hollers, and comes whangin' arter me out-a-doors, the leetle

snake tail-piece wrigglin' behint her on the ground.

But Jazabel! When she sighted yan cow's belly, and seed them four weensy black men passin' the hat on the sly thar under hit, right smart she hopped round ag'in, ole Suke, ketched up that snake tail-piece and threwed hit plumb in the middle of 'em.

That shore fulfilled ole Doc Gib's charm preachment on busted snake pieces!

Fust tetch o' that tail-piece, them four leetle black men spliced together in one eye-bat, and thar was hangin' onct more yan slim, long black-snake, crooklin' hisself round the middle of Matty Shell.

This time, though, afore I could holler "*Samuel!*" that goll serpent slides away up to nowhars on the palin'-top, and thar who-all was climbin' down t'other side but that long panty-legged Black Man, jist uppin' his high black hat, bowin' moughty piert to my ole woman.

Pime-blank perlite as a preacher he war, and jist as he raised up his black cone lid, ri'chunder hit inside, thar they was growin'

from his haid-piece, p'int up'ards,—ole Matty Shell's twin horns!

Puff he drapped, like a shadder, t'other side the palin'.

"Suke Shell," I says, moughty bashed, "ole woman, I shore slack-jawed ye about night-lodgin' a Bluegrasser, and I eats my pie humblesome. Who-all of a preacher thar bowed to ye is plumb black, and the horns is shore under his hat. But as *Samuel* axes in Scriptur': '*Arter whom doos thou pursue? Arter a daid dog? Arter a flea?*'—so now I answers him: 'Nowise! I pursues arter a moughtier varmint. I pursues arter who-all wears horns in his black hat and a sarpent in his black heart.'

"Yea, Matty, ole cow," I says, "I's studyin' to restore ye them purty twin horns back on your haid, and I's aimin' to destroy yan sarpent what suckles your dugs. So, follerin' the pree-scripturin' of ole uncle-doctor Gib Polly, I'll axe ye to stand stock-still now while I plucks ye for the rightly stuffin's of a charm-cure bullet."

Then Matty Shell she turns her big ears purty and tongue-licked the palin', while I

takes out my poke knife and skelps her, three leetle welts of haar—tail, saddle-ridge and nozzle.

Nextly, I hollers my left hand and spits thar good 'lowance of baccy juice, and soaks thar them three boodgets of cow-haars. Then I takes my right thumb and I rolls that mortar-slack into a round right-smart spittle-ball, which I glues hit over slick with a jacket of bee-gum wax.

Last-offly, I rams that round yaller spit-ball down the stack o' my rifle-gun, and I starts out the side gate, wavin' back to ole Sukey and Matty.

"So long, ole womans!" I hollers to 'em. "Ef this-here don't hunt who-all's black hat and fotch home them twin horns, I's grow me a paar myself."

Then I gazes a look fur down Greasy, and yander I sees that long Black Man crosstin' over the foot-log, his high cone-hat jist turnin' the bend.

"Heigh, thar! Hat and horns!" I hollers ag'in, and away I trails on the hunt.

Well, chilluns, seemed like ole Greasy wig-

gled like a gret black-snake hitself, and allers that Black Hat were turnin' a crook o' the trail.

Legged hit down all that mornin'; legged on all evenin', allers jist out o' gunshot, till right the last verge o' daylight yan Black Hat turned hissself up Rockhouse Branch and p'inted plumb fer Roan Ridge.

When I turned that fork, thar he were loamin' the trail beyand, tallin' up higher and blacker in the slanty long shadders of them overtoppin' gum-trees whar the day was dyin' to her death.

'Peared like his hat-cone len'thened a rod to ary leg-straddle, and who-all were under hits lid kep' slimmin' thar blackerer and spiderer, crissle-crosstin' them gray, long fog mists skeinin' down the mount'in.

Come time I retched the ridge-top, dark had fell. Night-jars was churnin' in the holler timber, and whippawills was whippin' the whey what never flies butter till dayrise.

Hit were a hantsy darkness thar. My spine-bone was tickled over with ice, and my chin-haars was pullin' their rootses; but I warn't

aimin' to skin home without chanctin' a shot at that Black Man arter the moon had riz.

So I clumb down a smart ways t'other side the ridge, gropin' the balls o' my feet till I tipped to a big felled log thar, clumb up over, and sot down on the round rim aidge, facin' off down Roan Branch towards Cutshin.

The Seven Stars was pricklin' the roof o' the woods, and the Leetle Baar were peekin' his eyes over right smart, but I was studyin' to wait thar till the moon swung a stiddier lantern to go by.

So thar I plumb sot, harkin' of the horndin' owls grave-tombin' the leetle birds in the bottoms.—Last, I cricked back my neck-bone, and here she come, full moon, jist only the blade-edge of her yit, nickin' the ridge-top.

P'int-blank then, that log I were settin' on humped me in the britch and turned over, spillin' me down off in the bresh.

Fellers, that tetched me off like powder!

Spang-up I jumped, and started runnin' plumb north along the ridge-slope, leeseide o' that humpin' log. Never glimpsed behind me, but jist legged hit fer home, tryin' fer to clair

past the eaves-drip o' that tarnation long timber log.

But allers hits dark aidge hung over me, to my right elbow. Daren't chanct to climb over hit humpin' thar, yit Greasy and my ole woman and Matty Shell was up over and down yanside. My lungs creaked dry as hay dust, and my mouth wheezled like a hole full o' crickets. Then I slacked down slow.

"Solomon, you jackin' fool, that log hain't humpin'! You must 'a' jest slipped on the moss rim of hit and spilled ye."

"Reckon I must 'a' did, Sol," says I.

That gored me in the pride, and I stopped, mad huffin'.

"I's chanct ye ag'in, ole log roller!"

And I clumb up on the rim of hit and sot down squar, soppin' the sweat outen my eye-piggins with the tail o' my chin-bresh.

Well, sirs, the moon hadn't nicked only half her plate on Roan ridge-top, and I hadn't only tuck jes' time fer to flip off a bat from nestin' in my back haars, when ag'in that log humped up and turned over, me landin' down Cutshin side in a bur bramble.

That time, chilluns, fire couldn't a-flasht me fer trackin' north!

I frizzled along the under aidge o' that log like a trail o' char-lightnin'. Left a mile o' my bresh-whiskers tatterin' the wind thar behind me. Dad-lucky for my balanct, that log kep' slimmin' up towards the peak o' Roan mount'in, till right thar hit riz up aloft and ended himself in a black thunderin' haid-piece. —The jaws of hit were gap-splitted in the blazin' full plate o' the moon, rim-sawin' hit with a sharp double ridge of gret teeth, and pitch-forkin' the middle with a blood-rid tongue fire-flickin' the tops o' the timber. Ri'chover hit, the rim-band o' the moon was a-wearin' two towerin' twin horns retchin' up in the black hat o' midnight.—Ri'chunder hit, I drapped in the trail.

Axe Godamighty ef I prayed thar to *Samuel* and Gib Polly and the spell o' that cow-haar bullet!

That long black haid loamed down at me, gappin' open his gullet.—Then I hollers up aloud in the darksome cone of his hat-piece:

“*Samuel! Samuel!*”

WHO-ALL'S BLACK HAT

“ ‘*Arter whom is the king of Israel come out? Arter whom doos thou pursue?*’ ”

“Verily now I pursues arter who-all wears horns in his black hat and a serpent in his black heart!

“Yea, ole Gib Polly! Arter whom doos *thou* pursue with the dose of thy charm-curin’?—

“ ‘Black-snake brittle
Skelpt and skun,
Cow-haar spittle
In a rifle-gun!’ ”

I p’inted plumb in his whalin’ gullet: *Bang*
I blazed with that spittle core!

That ended hit on the airth of old Uncle
Gib and under the heaven of *Samuel*.

Who-all’s snake haid-piece drapped to the
peak o’ Roan mount’in, daid as a rock, gappin’
up his gret tooth ridges to etarnity.—Fur down
below, you kin gaze up of hit, right thar, to this
day!

And what about who-all’s black hat? Com-
in’ down to airth, is hit?

No-o, chilluns, never hit won’t!

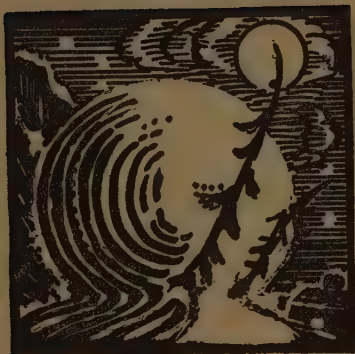
Hit's shore stuck up yander, som'ars betwixt the Leetle Baar and the Big Dipper: and ri'ch-under hits gret dark cone the foamsy tides o' the Milky Way keeps allers ebbin' and flowin'.

Whar from doos they flow?

Why, fer shore, they jist nacherly flows from the dugs of my ole Matty Shell, hitched to our back palin'.

Ever sence that rifle-gun shot, she chews her cud thar, tongue-lickin' the leaves of that apple-thorn-tree,—and tossin' of her purty twin horns!

Ten: THE MEAT OF A SNOWBALL



THE MEAT OF A SNOWBALL

HEIGH, you-uns in thar! Howdy-all,
chilluns!

Yea, shore, hit's your old Uncle
Sol back ag'in, glib's a whip-lash. Jehu, what
a nor'wester! Takes this fall o' the year for to
put the limber in old laigs and the ripe pink in
young faces, same's hern thar, Delindy-Jane's!

*Her cheeks is cherry-ripe, so's you could eat
her.—*

Hop up, purty little black-eyed creeter!

Hop up, you-all, fellers! Come out and
look a-yander—at that timber creation.

Dad bless them quilty-colyured leaves!
God-amighty's wife is shore fall-cleanin' her
Ole Man's cabin, hangin' out her bed-kivvers
on the mount'in palin's. Jist sample 'em thar!
Rose-o'-Sharon, Water-Wave, Honeycomb,
Seven Diamonds, Injun Stair Step, Loamin'

Star—thar they all is, flappin' their pided fleeces in the four winds o' Gabriel!

Come in and sot down—me? Nay, I's on the canter. How's that? Git to stop here fust and give ye a long tale? No-o, Lijey, I ain't no tail-bearin' critter. I's be like old Uncle Rabbit:

*Coon he has a ringsy tail,
Possum's tail is baar,
Rabbit hain't no tail at all
But a leetle bunch o' haar.*

Haw, Lor' sakes! Well, ef a "leetle bunch" will sufficion ye. All right, then, rounders, when I hops into the side bushes, jist you foller the blaze o' my cotton-bresh and I's trail ye to find your fust snowball-nut.

What-all of a nut creation is a snowball-nut?

Why, hit's nacherly a snowball what grows a bur outside and a meat inside—sech a same like yander chistnut-bur what you's aimin' to crack open thar with that rock, Lijey.

Never seen one yit? Never said ye seen one! I said you'll be trackin' the fust and onliest

snowball-nut in your never-borned days, *ef* you ups and follers my trail.

So, now! Sharp your ears and nose, and jist foller my tracks till you ketches me up forty year behind the day you was borned. Right thar ye'll behold me standin' shin-deep in the snow on the top of ole Limestone Clift, aimin' my new rifle-gun plumb at the dod-purtiest—

Now, chilluns, jist you hold that gun sighted straight whiles I bescribe ye the natur' o' yan snow meextur.

Thot-thar snow were the stickiest mud-pie-di-est slosh what ever I glued my laigs into.—Didn't never ye plump your fingers into honey-cake dough, afore hit's fire-baked? Then ye tried for to lick hit off, didn't ye? Got your nose all gobbled up, and jammed a wad in one eye, wink-blindin' ye. Then ye worsened the mess by rubbin' your pants and cleavin' your britch to the cheer-bottom!

Well, so hit were that-a-way I mired my shins in that half melty snow-slosh.—Ary step o' that trail up ole Lime-Stone, my laigs sucked out and wallered in. No needs for

to wear gum-boots, I hadn't; I were gummed fore and hind to the split o' my fork with the dad-mudsy mess. And tired-footed? Lorsy! I could 'a' sank in my tracks and said my bed-prayers twenty times thar, trackin' up that mount'in, hadn't ben how I'd made a bet that day with Chunk Farley.

I betted him my new rifle-gun agin his four-bladed Tennessee skelpin'-knife how I'd bring down four hunderd pound o' fresh meat with one gun-bullet, afore the sun undered behind the ridge of ole Limestone.

Well, Chunk he aimed to come along for witness, but that snow mire sloughed him too goll wearisome, so he turned back home. Fust, though, he left me jist one only load in my gun-barrel, in accordin' to our bet bargain.

Now, then, chilluns, air ye still holdin' that rifle-gun sighted straight? Good enough! Hand her over, then, and jist watch me bring down that four hunderd pound o' meat with one powder blaze!

Thar she stood, 'way aloft o' me, four-pinned in the snow, p'intin' her red, purty cock-

ears—the dod-plumpiest, big-belliedest roe deer in the Seven Ridges. Black as a gum-log shadder she were, bulgin' thar agin yan red sun-ball, jist drappin' behind the clift-top.

Thinks I, thar's shore four laigs packin' a hunderd pounds apiece. Thar I blazed away.

Whannng! she jumped, all fours, from the bench o' the mount'in, slued over in the air, and come rollin' down the clift, deader than last week Monday.

I scrabbled for to head off the pitch of her body, but the goin' hindered me, and she passed jist beyand my arm-retch, heavied her over the aidge of a precipiece, and comminced rollin' down the snow-slant towards the valley.

Well, fellers, she were round plump enough to start in with, but that dod-sticky snow slosh shore doubled her bigness with ary rod o' the roll-down. Gathered hit up, she did, like dough on a roller. Left a skun-bare track be-hint her on the mount'in, tearin' up mud and ivy-bushes in a whirlin' batter same's flour glue.

Half-way down she were one thunderin', yaller-gray snowball, biggerin' with every bounce. Last sight I ketched of her below, she

were holy-rollerin' for the bottom like a baby avalance.

Childers, hit done tuck me most nigh till moon-up afore I clumb 'way down thar for to bag my game. Hit had landed plumb acrosst the trail beside o' the crick-bed.

Yea, sirs, that were a smart sizable nut to pack in your poke, that snowball! Through and round, hit were about the bigness of four smoke-houses. Sticky hit were as a butternut, but yit hit were bristlin' all over with tored-up rootses, more the same of a chistnut-bur.

Anyways, I knewed the meat of hit was wropped up safe in the middle; so bein' the time were gittin' too darkish to dig a shaft for hit, thinks I to me, "I 'low I'll take to-night with Chunk Farley to his cabin, and fotch him over here in the mornin' to help shell out the meat and win my bargain bet."

So thunk, so done.

Chunk had turned in to bed, but he heerd my step and peeked of me thar in the moon, stand-in' on the door-sill.

"Howdy, Sol," says he. "Back luckless and

gameless, air ye? You kin jist hang yan rifle-gun o' mine ri'chere over my bed-piller."

"Thank ye, Chunk," says I. "And *you* kin jist tuck yan Tennessee skelpin'-knife o' mine ri'chere under my belt-strop. I'll show ye four hunderd pounds o' game luck in the mornin'."

"Want to know!" he answers peepsy. "Turn in then, Sol." And right thar he bust out snorin' like a hog-pen.

Well, so I jined him. But come about midnight I woked up shacklin' and chitterin' with cold. Fell such a frost hit had, my eyeballs was clean iced over in their sockets, and the lid-hinges creakin' like grackle-birds. Piled on six extry kivver quilts, but yit I were shacklin' worser'n a popple. So I tore a hole in the bedcloth, and slept head-down in the feathers.

Next mornin', Chunk and me piled into coon-skins and started for Limestone bottom, me totin' two crowbars. Right smart us sighted that snowball.

"Thar, Chunk," I hollers, "yander's my lucky shot!"

"Whar?" axes Chunk, prospectin' the baby avalance.

"Inside o' that-thar," says I. "Hit's the meat o' yan snowball-nut."

But Chunk he snorted moughty peevy.

"Only nut I sees is a-growin' on your neck, Solomon. And *hit's* holler."

"You jist holp me to crack this-yere," says I, "and I'll show ye the karnel."

So I hands him a crowbar, and us tackled that snowball on hits opposite axles. But, Lorsy me! Us maht as well of tackled ole Limestone Clift himself. Dadfetch that frost spell! Over night hit had froze that snowball most harderer than flint rock. Hacked and picked, us did, with them two iron crowbars, till afore they hadn't druv in more'n half their len'ths, thar they both stuck, wedge-fast, froze in tight as twin axle-bars.

Chunk glummed at me, and cussed:

"Dod divvil ye, Sol, for delutin' me like a fool! I's goin' home!"

"Hold back thar, Chunk! I 'low this-yere shell is crusty, but they's four hunderd pounds o' fresh deer meat in the middle of hit. Honest Injun they is!"

"They ain't no honest Injun on airth,"

spitted Chunk, "and they ain't nothin' but crust to yan shell—Solomon included! As fer our bet, I wins hit, and Chunk Farley keeps that new rifle-gun for hisn. Lucky you left hit to my cabin. Watch good you keep out o' thar hinceforthly!"

And Chunk he pegged off home, huffin' like a mule with the fistalo.

Afore I could arguify him back he were beyand my tongue-retch, so I upped and answered him in the secret chamber o' my soul.

"Lo, Chunk Farley," I says, "go and depart! Keep the dadburned rifle-gun—till I calls for hit. But, Chunk, you're fergittin' the etarnal prophecy of *Jeremiah*. *Jeremiah* he says, Seventeen, Ten, Eleven: '*Lo,*' he says, '*I, the Lord, searches the heart. As the pa't-tidge-bird setteth on aiggs and hatcheth them not, so him what gitteth riches, and not by right (Mind ye thar, Chunk—not by right!) he shall leave them in the middist of his days, and at his end shall he be a fool.*'

"Now, then, Lord," I says, "You has searched *me* in the heart, and Thou has found me ready to hatch this moughtiest of aiggs,

which ole Limestone has nacherly laid. But, lo! You nowise beholds me aimin' to set on hit here, like a fool pa'ttidge-bird. On the opposite, I's aimin' and undertakin' now to ride hit home to my ole woman, for to hatch hit thar in the propersome time and season, when snowball-nuts is nacherly ripe to shell out. So, for this-yere foresightful undertakin', Lord, I's mere axin' Ye to holp me find the neeborly loan of ten mule-brutes."

Well, fellers, to peel down my secret deal with Jehovey to the quick of hit, afore night I had that snowball hitched by a toggle-chain to them two crowbar axles, and me balanct on hit, drivin' five team o' my neebors' mules down the trail-bed o' Greasy.

Jig-dancin'?—Well, sirs, in my day I's danced *Zeb Coon* and *Durang's Horn-pipe* in more cabin-tunks than ole David ever danced in Israel-land; but I never did balanct partners thar to sech jiggerin' high steps, as what I were balancin' single now on the tops o' that wheelin' ice-ball, bumpin' the trail behind the tanklin' bells o' that gallopin' mule-gang.

Whip-tailin' 'em I was, the hull five teams.

Back o' me come all the neebors from nine branches, double-marchin' hit. And right as I steered my snow punkin for to wheel her into my home palin', me takin' one last flyin' hop for the smoke-house ridge-comb—Jerushy! The holler them fellers let out, hit airth-quaked Pine Mount'in clair from Pineville to Hurricane Gap!

Me, I had to reespond from the ridge-comb with kindly an election speech; and ef hadn't my ole woman popped out thar, and cut short my noration, me and her maht have ben livin' to the White House yit. As hit were, she tongue-licked the hull gang clair of our palin' afore I could slide down off the smoke-house; and the balant o' that winter I spent dodgin' her cross-examinin's on the natur' of snowball-nuts.

"Why ye done brung hit on the premises, that massiful big ball? What *are* hit, anyhow, Solomon?"

"Hit's the nacheral aigg of the ole airth us lives on, Sukey. Leastways these brought-on schoolma'ams study to tell us how the ole airth is nacherly plumb round in the waist-band."

"Quit your Scripturless gab!" says she. Then she goes at me ag'in.

All the same, I got back on her right smart.

Hit comin' warm time, the rootsy bur o' that snowball begun for to green out with mount'in ivy, and to blossom, bright's the sun-ball, with the purtiest wild blooms—poke-flowers, smart grasses, queen-o'-the-medders, and sech.

Thinks I, "Now's the time hit's ripe to win back my rifle-gun from Chunk Farley." So I says to Suke:

"Git ready the roastin'-iron," I says.

"What fer?" says she.

"Fer a thank offerin' to Jehovy."

That shet her tight, and she tuck about her business.

So I sends an invitationin' to Chunk for to bring the gun and skelpin'-knife, and to Fiddler John along of his fiddle-box.

Then, all onbeknownst, I sinks a shaft in the sunny side o' that snowball-nut, and onkivvers the karnel I were minin' for! Thar I skewers hit to a rope, but I leaves hit lay, and patches the openin' hole over ag'in with ivy.

Then I places a table and stools right for-

nenst hit, and prepares a set-out o' flower blooms for to burnish the feast o' fresh venison, which the Lord's providence had presarved to that same hour of fulfilment.

So right then here come Chunk and Fiddler, cockin' their ears moughty cur'ous. Likewise Suke, cockin' hers the same.

"Fellers," I says, "welcome and set ye! Chunk," I says, "the hour of the Lord is at hand. For '*vengeance is mine*,' saith the Lord."

"Vengeance?" Chunk stambers out, grabbin' his gun. "What all of an invitationin' is this to?"

"To a feast of partnership! Yea, Chunk, in the daid of winter you cast me forth in *on*righteousness; but now, in the resurrection of warm time, I welcomes you back in righteousness. So now, in that same Scripturous sperrit, when I axes you to hand me over yan rifle-gun, you nacherly answers by handin' over—yan Tennessee skelpin'-knife likewise!"

"The deevil I does!" hollers Chunk. "And what does *you* hand *me* over, partner?"

"Four hunderd pounds o' fresh deer meat,

brung down with one gun-bullet, in accordin' to our bargain bet!"

Right thar I busted that ivy patch, and hauled over-hand on that skewered rope, till outen that mine shaft here hit come tumblin' to the ground—the dadplumpiest red roe deer, fresh as I shot her on Limestone Clift, and one bullet-hole in her groin.

Well, chilluns, that night, arter three on us had done holpin' Suke turn the roastin'-iron, they shore was fiddlin' at ole Sol Shell's till nigh sun-up.—Next day, me and Chunk largened that mineshaft to a right smart cellar-hole, which us timbered hit in with a door.

Right over hit, on the roundin' comb of the roof slope, standin' in a posy-patch of queen-o'-the-medders, was a-peepin' thar yan red roe deer, cockin' of her purty ears—how hit were that Tennessee knife had skelped her hide, and Chunk he'd stuffed her to the life.

So thar that posy-patch bur on the *outside* shaddered off the summer sun, and wropt the snow nut *inside* cold as Chris'mas eve at the karnel.

And so thar that purty, stuffed deer amblem

become to be the sign of a new brought-on ice-house consarn, which our j'int rifle-gun winters raised us a prosperin' summer trade. Chunk chalked up our warnin' notice acrosst the door plank. Them as warn't sorry clerks like me at letter larnin' said they could read hit right smart thar:

“SHELL & FARLEY—PARTNERS

Fust-off Dealers in Snowball Meat

GAME PRESERVE—

NO POACHIN' ”

Eleven: THE MULE-HUMANS



THE MULE-HUMANS

CHILDERS, don't never git to squabblin' on a' amber-day. Don't resk hit. Hit mought lead ye in jep-party, where ye wouldn't know your own face in a mirrer-glass.

What-all *is* a' amber-day? Hain't you larned your almanack scriptures yit? A' amber-day is a *pizen* day. Hit's a day that one ongodless word will spell-charm your nearest kin so's you'd take him for the Deevil hisself. Old Horny sprinkled a handful o' them days through the year, like rat-pizened ears in a corn-crib, for fool critters to nibble at and shed the skins they was borned in.

No-o, hit don't plumb kill ye. Only jist ef ye wish the wrong wish, or speak the wrong word, the deevil he kin cross-breed ye to a dumb brute in one bat of his eye.—That's why me and my ole woman allers keeps our mouth shet

amber-days. We don't aim to git us in no sech a scrape as Godsey Scorse done with *his* ole woman, Mondie.

What-a-way did *they* done? Axe me no axin's, and I'll fib ye no fairy-tales. Hit were so fashion:

Years ago yander, Godsey Scorse war an up-creek neebor o' mine. Him and Mondie, his wife, they lived in a lonesome holler.

He were a good, lousy, lay-around, patient-ablest feller, Godsey; but she was pernickety as a pea-hen: gibblegabble and peck from day-up till dark.

Well, one fall o' the year, hit comin' night-down, I war passin' of their cabin, and I hears her thar in-ide brash-whackin' at him. So I stops and listens.

"Git your dad-burned big feet offen my toes, trompin' all over me! Cain't never give me room to set easy and stretch! Allers jammin' on me! Nothin' but clopper-legs and hoofs, you hain't! God-a-mighty knows you ain't nothin' but a mule-brute from the middle down—dad-bust ye!"

"And you—from the neck up, ole woman!"

he answers her.

"Yea, I wisht you *was* a saddle-critter," she hollers. "I'd ride ye down to Solomon Shell's and swap ye fer his gang o' shoats."

"And I'd trade *you* fer his ole sow!" he hollers back.

Well, I'd heerd enough. "Poor ole Godsey is shore losin' his patience," thinks I, "and 'tain't to wonder."—And I goes on home, about three mile down trail.

So thar I was a-settin' in the yard, tippin' snuff terbaccy, and hit darkin' outdoors. My ole woman she were pokin' the supper-pot, and kindly she raised up and says sobersome:

"Sol," she says, "what time is hit?"

"Fall o' the year," says I, "'most time fer supper."

"Quit triflin' me," she says. "Hit's amber-day."

And jist then I hears stones clickin' on the trail, and somebody hollers out in a quare, grummy voice:

"Hey, Solomon! Solomon Shell!"

Lorsy me! I looks up, and thar, high over

the palin's, I sees a shaddersome haid peekin' down the face of Godsey Scorse. All scrooged up hit were, goshawful, and his mouth gappin', like he seen a hant. Well, chilluns, that turned my belly over.

"Good evenin', Godsey," I says. "Air you ridin'?"

"No-o," he says, "I's leggin' hit."

"How did ye clumb up thar, that high?" I axes.

"I hain't clumb up," he answers me, the same quare noise.

"Hain't ye?" says I. "Well, come in, anyhow, and take a cheer."

"I cain't come in," says he, "and I cain't take a cheer, never no more."

"Why-fer no?" says I, in the pit o' my belly.

"My bottom hain't balanced right," says he. "Come out and prospect hit."

Well, rounders, out I goes through the palin' gate, and thar in the gloomin' I sees the quarest six-limbdest critter sence Joshuay tuck to raisin' horse flesh. The top halft of hit—arms, chist, and haid,—was shore 'nough Godsey Scorse hisself. He were chawin' terbaccy, his hat dipped

on his left eye, and one gallus was holdin' up his pants, which only they wasn't ary legs in 'em. Stid o' that, the impty breeches was danglin' thar split-busted, like a bib and tucker, down over the breast-front of a thunderin'-gret, leggy mule-critter, which hits withers sprung behind from the small o' Godsey's back. So the bottom halft of the hull goll machine were a quadrupeed, which his piebald cruppers was switchin' his hocks with a ratsy tail.

"Lordamassy!" I says. "If ye're aimin' to ride, Godsey, you's shore pitched for'ard in the saddle. But you's plumb right about your bottom never needin' a cheer ag'in. How-all did you git grafted with that-thar mule-rump?"

Poor Godsey jist rubbed his hind fetlocks and pawed dirt with one for'ard hoof, and he answers:

"Hit's plain weetchery!"

"No, 'tain't," I says; "hit's pizen. Ye're amber-day pizened. Somebody must 'a' ben cussin' you in angry for Old Horny to overhear hit."

"Yea," he says; "hit were Mondie, my ole woman. She mule-cussed me from the middle

down, and I cussed her back ag'in, from the neck up. For the love o' neebors, Sol, will ye help us git the spell off?"

"How kin I, Godsey?"

"Mondie wants me to axe ye—will ye trade your gang o' shoats for this-yere mule-brute. That's our one-only chanct to git shet of hit, she says."

"Whar's the rightly haid that goes with hit?" says I.

"To home with Mondie," says he. "Hit were too shame-bashed to come along with the laigs. Git up on behind, and I'll tote ye home, to look her over."

So upsy I climbs on the middle of his ridge-bone, which hit nigh splitted me in the fork, and he retches one hand to break him a hazel switch, and whops hissself in the shanks, and hollers out, "Co-oop, Godsey!" and away I rides him bareback, splashin' the crick ford.

Well, of all the goll-durned night-riders, us'ns was the quarest twins the moon ever riz on. I grabbed one busted gallus for a bridle-rein, but fust time I jerked hit, he turned his haid round sorrerful and says:

"Sol," he says, "I'd give ten bucks for to have your laigs in my pants."

Nary nuther word he spoke for a long piece o' trail, but he spit moughty reg'lar. Arter that I hadn't the sand for to bridle-steer him ag'in. So I jist aidged for'ard on his withers, and clipped both arms round his waist, to ease my own bacon behind.

A whisk o' rain come peltin' from the verge o' the moon. *Clob-clopperty* poor Godsey splashed his hoofs in the trail-puddles. Onc't he retched his hand in the poke of his impty pants for a chunk o' baccy. He chawed a quid o' that, which hit 'peared to live'-up his back-legs, for he trotted right smart till Preachin' Charlie's palin's.

Charlie war jist packin' a yoke o' full pails from his water spring, turnin' to ope his gate.

"Retch me up a drink, Preacher, will ye?" calls Godsey, puffin'. "This-here haulin' ole Sol uphill has wheezed me dry."

Preachin' Charlie give one look.

"Valley o' the shadder!" he yells, and he clares that gate same's a wild duck—the spilt pails swingin' out from his yoke like wing-

paddles. Half a mile back, I could hear him hollerin' to God yit thar.

Next cabin us passed was Fiddler John's. And thar he hisself was a-settin' on a gum-stump, sawin' of his fiddle in the face o' the moon. His own face war puckered up, losty in his music.

Godsey stopped, fore and aft.

"Heigh, John Fiddler," he cuts in, "kin *you* liquor me? I's lost my britch-bottle."

Old Fiddler pauses his fiddlestick plumb in the air, and he stares at us'ns a hull minute without winkin'.

"Double!" he says, drappin' his voice. "Nay, good feller! I hain't tetched a dram. In the Three Highest, I hain't! But if you-all is a horse-critter of Rivelation, you's the first mule-human ever I heerd quoted in Scriptur'. As fer britch-sperrits, I cain't give ye none from a bottle, but I kin from a fiddle-box."

Right thar then he struck up and sawed sech a dod-ghasted four-leggy reel that hit set Godsey high steppin', all fours, nigh pitchin' me off, whilst he galloped Injun-divvles 'most home afore slackin'.—Lather drippin' he was,

all over, belly and back frothin' white scum, and me settin' in the suds bath. Well, I curried him off, best I could, with his pants legs, till lastly us cantered up to his own cabin door. And thar was a-settin' his ole woman, rockin' of herself, with a bed-kivver throwed over her haid.

"Mondie," he hollers, "here's Sol. He wants the haid to go with the laigs afore he'll trade with us."

Sodom and Gemorrah! what a bray-squawl-in' she let out then!

"Hee-honker! — Hee-honker! — Hee-honker!"

And thar she poked her long mule-muzzle outen the bed-kivver, and her jaws gap-open a foot wide, stuck full o' gret grinders like a corn mill.

Chilluns, that drapped me to the ground!

"The poor dumb critter!" says Godsey. "That's the only last gab-language left in her, poor Mondie!"

Then Mondie she threwed off the bed-kivver, and riz up on the top doorstep. Yea! For to see that leetle woman-critter balancin' her

gret mule head-piece, big's a barrel keg, I shore wagered hit 'u'd topple her legs-up! But thar she stood wagglin' of her long, p'inted ears, and retchin' her both arms to Godsey.

Hit were a sight pitiful. The gret tear-drops, round as oak galls, come oozin' outen her muly pop-eyes, rollin' down off her nozzle, which she tried for to blow hit dry with her apron, but jist only drinched the cabin-yard.

And thar come Godsey tromplin' the flower-patch, all four hoofs diggin' up the mud like mattocks, and tuck Mondie in his arms, and he holds her mule haid tilted how hit ought to jine on to his mule underpinnin's, so's to sample one hull-complete mule-critter for the swap bargain.

"Thar, Sol," he says, "will ye trade in your ole sow for the hull consarn?"

"Dadfetch me, I won't!" says I. "The archeetecture don't jine. Thar's one joist missin' from the middle up."

"Yis, God help us!" he groans. "The mid-dlin's is lost out. I jist only cussed her neck-up'ards."

Well, at that, Mondie busts out hee-honkin'

ag'in fit to kill; but Godsey pats her nozzle soothey-like, and he hollers down one ear like a cornycoppee trumpet: "Co-oop, Mondie gal! I'll stick by ye, haid or tails."

Then he turns to me, plumb piteous, and says:

"Solomon," he says, "have a heart! How's we to git traded of this amber-day mule withouten you to holp us swap the spell off?"

"Godsey," I says, "listen of me. I wouldn't swap my ole sow, Chinkapin, for a' army of amber-day mules: no, nor her shoat babies nuther. All the same, I ain't a feller not to holp my neebors out. You and Mondie is pizen. Now, they's jist only one way I knows to git shet of amber-day pizen."

"In the fear o' God, what is hit?" he axes.

"You's said hit," I answers. "Hit's the fear o' God hitself. Hit's a dose o' Scriptur'. There hain't no other medicine kin purge ye of amber-day pizen. Air ye ready to swaller hit now?"

"Yis, shorely," he says.

"Then jist hand me yan hazel ridin'-switch ye got thar."

"The switch?" he says, side-steppin' with his hind-laigs, while he retched hit to me. "But what-all of a dose air ye aimin' to give us?"

"I's aimin' to dose ye with Balaam's medicine: *Numbers*, Two and Twenty, Twenty-seven to Twenty-nine:

"'And Balaam's anger hit were kindled and he smote the ass with a staff.'"

"Whoa, thar!" hollers Godsey to his hinter parts, which was buck-humpin' to let fly a double-backer. *"Not twenty-nine licks, Sol!"*

But I quoted straight on, calm's a cucumber:

"'And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she says unto Balaam: What have I done unto thee, she says, that thou hast smitten me these-yere three times?'"

"Hold yit!" spoke Godsey ag'in. *"Three doses, is hit? And jist only her swallers 'em?—Yea, now, that ain't so worse!"*

So then Godsey's spine comminced to slack rope a leetle, but mine jest gingered, a-stirrin' that Scriptur'-dose:

“‘*And Balaam says unto the ass: Because thou hast MOCKED me, he says!*’—

“Thar, neebors! That’s your Bible text: now follers your sarmon.”

So I raises that ridin’-switch and spits on hit.

That skeert poor Mondie flap-jawed. She honked one last *hee-honker* and rammed a black eye in Godsey, kissin’ his hat off blubberin’.

But I never scringes. I jist whistles that hazel switch in the air, and I larrups each of ’em three licks, haid-piece and cruppers.

That settled hit.

Yea, sirs, that druv the pizen plumb out! Godsey’s own legs was in his pants ag’in, and thar stood Mondie puggin’ up her red back-haars, a-snufflin’ of her leetle nose, and grinnin’ at him.

As fer that amber-day Mule-Deevil, hit cut loost and high-jumped clare over Godsey’s palin’s, me throwin’ the hazel switch after. Last thing I seed of hit, loamin’ agin the moon, the critter war raisin’ one hoof, tryin’ to tie a knot in the witch-stick, for to splice hits haid on. And if yan hoof warn’t *cloved* . . . ? . !

"Thar, Mondie," I says, moughty awfulsome, "you's clean purged fer *this* time, and you kin thank that dose o' Scriptur' for your purty face ag'in. But hinceforthly, mind ye ponder on the ass what mocked Balaam! And, Godsey, don't ye never git to treadin' on your ole woman's toes no more!"

Then Mondie sassed up piert and says:

"Hit jist pime-blank proves what I war callin' of him. God-a-mighty knows how Godsey hain't nothin' but a dadburned critter of a ole mu—"

"Choke off, thar!" hollers Godsey. "Dud-drattle ye!—Hit's amber-day yit!"

Now, neebors, I axes ye: *kin* humans git cured o' mule-cussidness?

Twelve: CAIN'S DUCKLINGS



CAIN'S DUCKLINGS

LOR', Cindy Ann, you's a sight! Whar ye ben at? How'd you done git your laigs all mud-sloughed up thataway? I 'low you's ben wadin' knee-deep in one o' these-yere mire bogs, buss me ef you hain't!—Yis?—Well, I knewed hit. Better watch good how you treads your toes in sechlike o' wallers. You mought git 'em nibbled by one o' Cain's ducklin's thar.

What! Lettin' on you hain't never heern o' Cain's ducklin's! Nor Preachin' Charlie, how he norated his bog-hole sarmon on murder and predeestination?—Quit climbin' all over me, chilluns! Set tight, and I's tell ye.

Yea, hit were spring o' the year, at dusky of day, jist between arter sundown and afore the stars ain't meller yit. The ridges was all saft with a blue wind, which hit rolled and billered the smoke-mist down the crick hollers, smutch-

in' out the blossomy world. Ye couldn't only tell whar the shads and elders was bloomin' by the honey-tickle in your nose.

Preachin' Charlie he'd ben funeralizin' for three days runnin', but his Scriptur' juice warn't sca'cely tapped yit. He'd trickle a bushel o' Bible ary rod o' the trail. Sometimes hit 'u'd sample pure Scriptur', and sometimes hit 'u'd sample pure Charlie; which hit was purely nacheral, seein' Charlie hisself had been samplin' more strongerer waters than Moses's for to season his sarmons with.

Well, hit were duskin' every minute, and the mist-smoke gittin' blue darker. So hit were nacheral how Charlie kindly losted the trail of his laigs in the trail of his aloquence. Me and Chunk Farley was follerin', single-file, and right smart us was all three squashin' the ooze of a bog waller. That fotched us to a stand-still.

Preachin' Charlie quit scripturin'. The night thar was blind as a bat's nest. Hantsy hit were, and lonesome.

Us stood and listened, for right thar come a leetle peepsy voice, pricklin' the dark:

CAIN'S DUCKLINGS

"Knee-deep!—Knee-deep!"

Then all of a onc't come a chunk-thunderin' beller, like the ole Bull o' Bashon:

"You'd better go round!—

You'd better go rou-nd!"

Dad swaller me, leetle chilluns! That 'most tititraciously ruined me!

"Who's thar?" hollered Chunk Farley, shakin'.

This time they was hunderds hollered him back, like a quar jamble o' sleigh-bells:

"Creak!—Creak!—Crickle-crack!

Crick-in-the-back!—go back! go back!

Knee-deep!—Knee-deep!

Hackamatack!—Knee-deep!"

Chunk groaned in his gum boots:

"What is they?"

"They's Cain's ducklin's," says Preachin' Charlie, moughty piert.

"What dad-weetched place air we in?" says Chunk.

"In the darksome land o' Nod," says Charlie.

Right thar, onc't more yan ole chunk-thunderer bellered ag'in:

*"You'd better go rou-nnd!—
You'll bubble and drown-nnd!"*

"Hully murder!" coughs out Chunk. "Who's yander?"

"Onhully murder, you mean," says Charlie. "Yander's ole Cain hisself, hantin' his ducks."

"Ducks in your dinner-poke!" says I, spittin' out in angry for foolin' myself so long. "We-all is plumb moonshined. Cain't you fellers tell the crack of a *toad-frog* from a ducklin'?"

"No, sir, us cain't!" rips back Charlie. "Nobody cain't in the dark, and them jist hatchin' from a bog-hole. Hain't you larned yit how toad-frogs and ducks was all one gineration afore the Flood?"

"No," says I.

"Than I's larn ye now," says he. "Set down on your britch, and I'll sarmon ye."

"Thanks to Glory us has a preacher along!"
 bumbled Chunk Farley.

Well, I thanked Glory, too. So me and Chunk shuttled up our shankses on a mud-bench and jist sot thar in the congregation, while them *Knee-deepers* in the choir kep' up their hymn-hollerin', and Preachin' Charlie jined in with his bog-hole sarmon.

Lucky for us'ns, we was prime stocked with corn-liquor, elsewise that bog ooze maht of leaked into our bones afore Charlie concluded his argymint. As hit were, the britch-bottles kep' passin' round, whilst he talked Job's coffin to hits grave and the ole moon to her risin'.

Startin' in at the Flood, he kep' backin' toward the Gyarden, teeterin' on the aidge of Oreeginal Sin, and headin' sideways for the Fall.

"Brethren!" says he. "Bogs is the last scourin's of the gret Flood. When the waters swaged down from the Ark, all the onclean beastes of Oreeginal Sin, what nacherly wouldn't drownd, were left 'posited in the mire-pits

which hadn't no runnin' outlets. Sech-like is the reptile ginerations, the toad-frog varmint, and the granny-hatchets. They-all harks back to Adams's stockpond in the Gyarden; only thar they was in their fust innocence.

"Thar in the pleasantness of Eden, they-all bein' nacherly angels, evenly the rep-tiles was all purely feathered in purple and gold. Winged they was same's bird-critters, head-pieces geared out with pided beaks, and their tail-pieces tied up purty in tassel-knots. Yea, sirs, and the bird-tribe theirselves was high-borned kin to the cherubims—leetle plump babe faces in their neck-ruffles. Voices they had more sweetfuler than mipkin mockin'-birds in plum-bloomin' time. Mud varmint and water-fowl, air-wingers and tree-climbers, they was all then musicianers together.

"So come hit how the ducks and toad-frogs was all one kin and gineration on them innocent pond-waters of Eden.

"Howsomever, brethren, you knows the old history: how Predeestination picked the Apple, and how Free-Will tuck a double fall outen the Gyarden gate, so's the fust paar o' humans had

fer to raise their leetle offsprigs in the waller of
Oreeginal Sin. Cain and Abel war the sprigs.

"Cain war raised to home-farm and Abel to
hill-pastur'. Old Adam give Cain the Eu-
phrates crick-bottom for his plantation, and
Abel the Tigris for hisn. So whiles Abel he
tuck to sheep-raisin', Cain he nacherly tuck to
duck-breedin'.

"Well, come a day Cain drapped in at old
Adams's cabin, and behapped his brother Abel
war visitin' thar.

" 'Paw,' says Cain to old Adam, 'I's got this-
yer Euphrates done splash-dammed, like you
told me, and hit shore doos make a dad-purty
mill-pond. So now I kin grist my corn crap.
But where-all is them ducks o' yourn, which
you done promised me, for to fat 'em up, with
the corn crap? "

" 'Ducks?' thinks Abel to hisself; but he
never gabbed nothin' out aloud.

" 'Son,' answers his paw to Cain, 'seems like
hit's a shame to disapp'int ye, but I left them
ducks behind, in me-and-maw's hurry arter
the apple-pickin'. Ole Jehovey has 'em yit in

his gyarden stock-pond, but I daresn't dispute him his title.'

" 'Why daresn't ye, Paw?' Cain he axes.

" ' 'Caiz, son,' says Adam, 'hit 'u'd jist raise up our ole law-suit—Predeestination agin Free Will, he calls hit. All the same, ef *you* wants to chanc't them ducks with Predeestination, you maht climb the palin's in the dark o' the moon, and sample a paar on your own free-will hook. Mind you pack home the ole drake-rooster for to hosbond the woman-birds; and watch good for Jehovey's gate-foreman with his angel-sword!'

"Well, brethren, so Cain done hit. In the dark o' the moon he ketched the gate-angel nappin', skun over the gyarden palin's, and sampled home two paradise ducks with their ole drake-bird hosbond.

"That season, come Michaelmas, Cain had the Euphrates swimmin' with a crap o' ducklin's which they stopped navigation fer ten mile above the splash-dam.

"Fur-off on his hill pastur', Abel he stared at them ducks with gazeful thoughts; but he never thunk nothin' out aloud.

"So Michaelmas mornin', bein' time when the harvest tax on Oreeginal Sin were duly payable, Lord Jehovey stepped down to his gate for to nacherly collect all was comin' to him. And hit came to pass that Cain and Abel met up with him thar, all three together.

"Then Scriptur' hit says: '*Cain brung of the fruit of the ground an offerin' unto the Lord. And Abel he also brung of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof.*'

"'Good mornin', fellers!' says Jehovey. —'How's craps?'

"'Craps is fat in the land, O Lord!' answers Cain, bowin' his haid.

"But Abel he raised his eyes toward the Euphrates, and thunk out aloud: 'Yea, Lord! Craps is likewise fat in the *water!*'

"Then the Lord Jehovey raised *his* eyes and gazed them on the crick Euphrates, and he measured thereof ten mile o' swimmin' fat ducks; and he thunk and thunk,—but he never thunked nothin' out aloud.

"Then Scriptur' hit says: '*The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offerin', but unto Cain and to his offerin' he hadn't nowise no re-*

spect. And Cain war very wroth, and his countenance fell.—And Cain talked to Abel his brother: and hit came to pass, when they was in the field, that Cain riz up agin Abel his brother and slewed him.’

“Yea, feller-Christ’ans, you-all knows the ole cuss o’ Cain which the Lord laid on him: ‘The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cusst from the airth.

‘And Cain he says unto the Lord: Behold, he says, thou has driv me out this day from the face o’ the airth: and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vaggybond in the airth.

‘And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, and Cain he went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod.’ ”

Now, Preachin’ Charlie he war jist stoppin’ for to gargle his throat with corn-liquor, when ag’in yan ole Bull o’ Bashoner chunk-thundered outen the bog-water:

“You’ll bubble and drown-nnd!—

“You’d better go rou-nnd!—

And right thar, in the crookled wake of the
 • old uppin' moon, here popped up the haid of
 ole Cain hisself, chinnin' his gret green sickle-
 mouth and his swoley eye-knobs plumb on a
 bloom of a water-lily.

"Yea, thar!" hollers Preachin' Charlie,
 swingin' Chunk's britch-bottle in the air.
 "Hit's you hitself,—be ye?—thou murder-
 slayer of thy brother Abel!"

But yan murder-slayer jist winked one eye
 from the lily-bloom, and floated up his yaller-
 spottled humpback, a-layin' thar on his belly,
 his long, green leg-paddles retched on the
 water-pads, ring-arounded with the moon
 ripples.

"*'Bubble and drownd,'* will us? Nay, sir-r,
 Brother Cain!" hollers Charlie ag'in. "You
 hitself is drownded in thy brother's blood and riz
 in the mark of thy cussedness. For, lo! in the
 fulfilment of Scriptur', behold now the hump
 on thy back which the Lord set on ye! And
 who now is driv' from the airth for to become a
 vaggybond in the water-mire? Who now is
 went out from the presence of the Lord, for to
 dwell in the darksome land of Nod, world

without endin'? Yea, who now has reaped the crap of Predeestination for robbin' the ducks of Eden on his own free-will hook?

"Never beller back to me, Cain! You comes by hit nacheral, this-yere Oreeginal Sin. Hit's borned right in ye!—Your maw and paw robbed the Lord's apple-tree, and thataway fell all man-critters. Then you ups and robs His stock-pond, and thataway fell all duck-critters. The robber and his plunder He cusst 'em both eempartially. You and them ducks He damnationed ye bothly to onc't. Both together He has blasted ye to dwell in the bubbly mire which hit oozed from the blood of murder. Yea, Cain! *Bloody murder* hollers yit in the voice of ye, evermorely!"

Then Preachin' Charlie he turned him from ole Cain, layin' thar murdersome in the lily-pads, and he draps his voice kindly mournful, and he says to us fellers, me and Chunk:

"Brethren," he says, "as fer them paradise ducks, the Lord's eternal cuss has skun 'em, feathers and beaks. Nothin' birdsome hain't left to 'em, but the webs in their feet and the crack in their pitch when they's borned.

“Only jist for a leetle dreamsy time, on the verge of A-prile, afore they’s old enough to git a-quotin’ Cain’s murder,—evenin’s arter dew-fall, whiles yit the plum-bloom smells, and they halfly remimbers their ole sweetful songs away-y-y back in the feather-winged Gyarden, then them naked babelings pokes their drum-tight throats outen the bog-mire, and they blows leetle bubbles of mockin’-bird music in the eve-dusk.

“Tries, they doos, to picture hit back, their ole purty angel time, but the bubbles bust while they’s pipin’. Yit while they pipes, shet your eyes thar, and you’ll ’low ye hears a mipkin or a thrush-bird jist aimin’ to tune up. The wide-awakers whistles:

“*‘Knee-deep!—Knee-deep!’*”

But the leetle sleepy fellers they hollers, fur-off and dreamsy:—

“*‘Eden! Eden! Eden-gyarden!’ . . .*”

“Hark a-yander, Solomon! Listen at ’em thar—the poor, damned leetle ducklin’s!”

NOTE

NOTE

The present volume, "Tall Tales," is one of a group of writings, by the author, concerned with aspects of folk life in the Kentucky Mountains. Under the title, "A Mountain Munchhausen," these tales were first published in *The Century Magazine* (July—November, 1924).

Other writings in the group, already published, are the plays, "This Fine-Pretty World" (Macmillan, Jan., 1924), and "Napoleon Crossing the Rockies" (*Century*, April, 1924); and an article: "Untamed America: A Comment on a Sojourn in the Kentucky Mountains," with excerpts from the trail-journal of Marion MacKaye (*Survey Graphic*, Jan., 1924).

Some others—completed, and uncompleted—are in preparation.

P. M—K.

Cornish, N. H.,

July, 1925.



THE END

